



Movement in Omaha for Racial Equity

## **Antiracism Statement of Purpose**

### **HOW IT IS**

The policies and practices of Nebraska's local public institutions, educational systems and too many of its nonprofit organizations are racist. They are planned, developed and implemented in a manner that excludes people of color and therefore perpetuates racial and ethnic inequities. When these institutions and organizations *do* ask communities of color to express their needs and desires, it is frequently in cynical pursuit of the veneer of civic engagement (especially true when Black and Brown votes are needed), while those needs and desires are then systematically ignored in order for business to go on as usual, further emboldening the white supremacists already in control. These circumstances work in negative congruence to degrade existing social capital and entrench civic disengagement precisely among communities most scarred by the historic injustices of racism, ethnocentrism, and associated social harms.

People of color are struggling to thrive in communities oppressed by seemingly intractable inequities resulting from systemic racism. Add to that the crushing cascade of adverse emotional consequences associated with being forsaken in repeated attempts to achieve authentic involvement in local civic affairs: the keen pain of racial and ethnic exclusion; the erosion of trust; the arousal of frustration and anger; and the subsequent decline into pessimism, alienation and learned helplessness. The long-term consequences of what some would call a deliberately harmful civics lesson is at first apathy followed ultimately by the nearly complete civic withdrawal of our most vulnerable communities.

Estranged from populations they are intended to support, our public institutions, educational systems, and nonprofit organizations, along with the towns and cities that are home to them, are weakened. Vulnerable communities of color are increasingly plagued by inequities in every facet of their existence (e.g., jobs, health, education, transportation, housing, safety). An already unhealthy environment is intensified by the depletion of societal resources when these communities are uninvolved at best and suspicious and resistant at worst. Practices of good governance are declining. When individuals and communities of color stop caring about the towns and cities they live in, that alienation translates into enormous public harm in the form of deteriorating institutions and organizations, and failing municipalities (manifested in recent excruciating example, in the rise of the police state).

### **HOW IT SHOULD BE**

Nurturing antiracist policies and practices requires authentic civic engagement of communities of color over the long term. That will help repair and fortify the social fabric that supports institutions and organizations by strengthening communities of color, which in turn will revitalize our cities and state. Positive, healthy and systemic transformation of our public institutions and nonprofits requires the active civic involvement and expansion of social capital within, among, and between communities of color. The purposeful and thoughtful expansion of social capital necessitates the amplification of the societal resources of connectedness and reciprocity; it includes fostering avenues of communication and simultaneously cultivating and strengthening bonds of trust; and it calls for channeling and transforming apathy and indignation into engagement and positive action.

The direct outcome of antiracist policies and practices will be measured by reduced segregation and expanded racial equity. Active anti-racism must also exist at the intersection of race with other marginalized identities, such as class, LGBTQIA+, and disability. It will be measured by key decision-making power in the hands of people of color at every level of community, and throughout local, regional, and statewide systems and institutions.

## **HOPE FOR GETTING THERE**

We need to overcome the race-based estrangement that currently exists between communities of color and our local institutions and nonprofits. Through cultural and racial humility, we can work towards civically re-engaging communities of color in meaningful and shared efforts to enhance quality of life. Mutual respect and appreciation have to be reestablished. Genuine linkages between communities of color and the practices of public policy making must be nourished. For that to happen, communities must feel safe, heard, appreciated and recognized as the experts they are in the policies and practices that effect their own well-being. Slowly but surely, we can encourage and strengthen social and communication networks, prompt the emergence of common concerns and hopes, and affirm and advance mutual interests. Through planning and decision-making driven by communities of color, we will adopt antiracist policy recommendations as well as changes in organizational practice. In this manner, we will cooperatively replenish the stock of vital social capital required to expand and animate meaningful multi-racial civic engagement, and positively contribute to the evolution of responsive, forward acting, antiracist public and private institutions. By expanding the capacity of communities of color to become public policy makers, we can re-energize the human infrastructure necessary to support more dynamic and vibrant communities that are antiracist to the core.