

Talking about Race

ACT (Affirm, Counter, Transform)

Regional Equity Strategy: Learning Opportunity

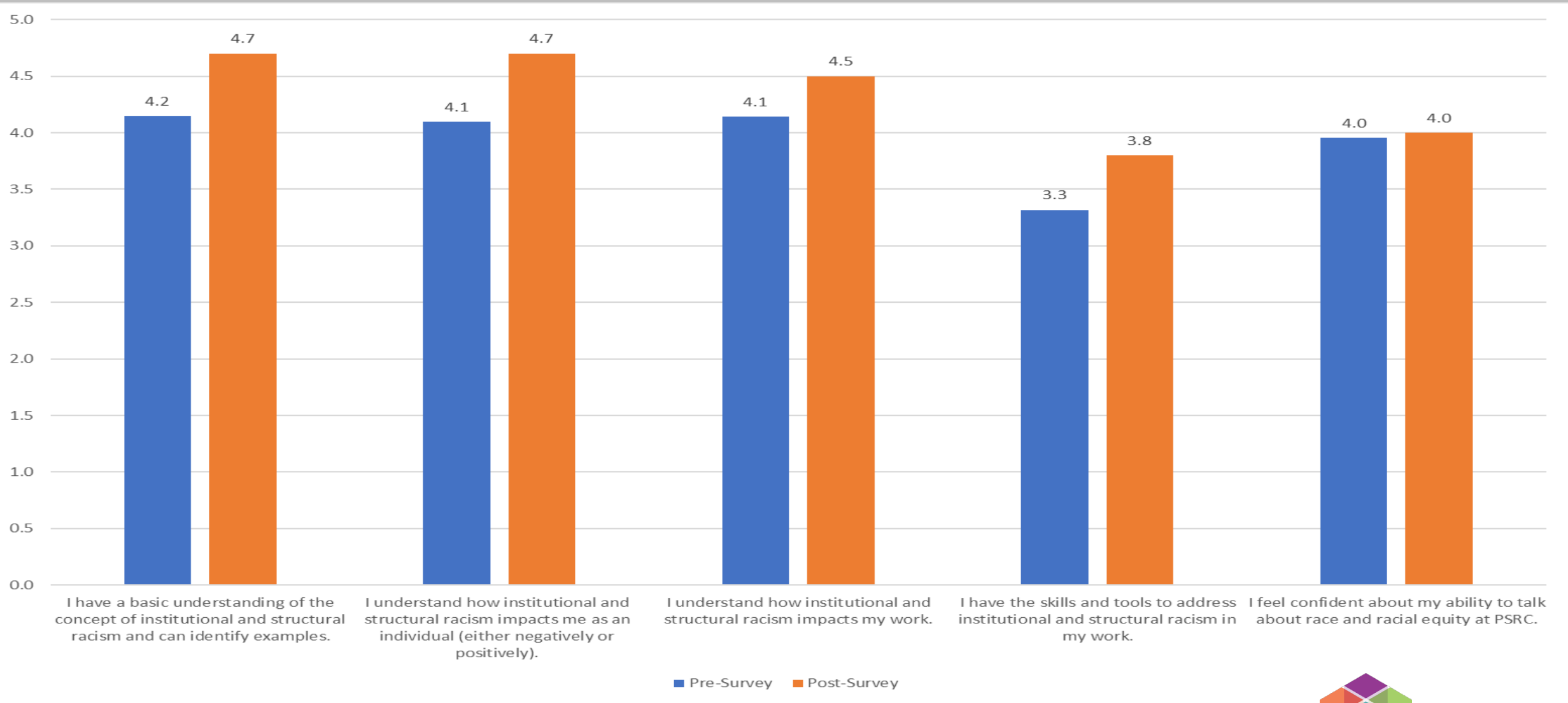
April 2023



Puget Sound Regional Council



Joint Board Session Structural Racism Survey



Highlights From the Feedback



- Board members liked the interactive polling, quizzes, and short videos
- Material was very well presented
- This is a different/new perspective when forming policies
 - What can we do now?
 - How can we start implementing into our work?





The region's vision for equity...

All people have the means to attain the resources and opportunities that improve their quality of life and enable them to reach full potential. Differences in life outcomes cannot be predicted by race, class, or any other identity. Communities of color, historically marginalized communities, and those affected by poverty are engaged in decision-making processes, planning, and policy-making.



Different Dimensions of Racism



Internalized Racism

Private beliefs and biases about race, influenced by our culture (e.g., prejudice towards others of a different race; negative beliefs about oneself by people of color).



Institutional Racism

Discriminatory policies and practices of particular institutions (e.g., department of housing) that produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.



Interpersonal Racism

Bias that occurs when individuals interact with others and their personal racial beliefs affect their public interactions.



Structural Racism

Cumulative effects of history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.

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Today's Goals

- Apply what we've learned in previous sessions to ACT (Affirm, Counter, Transform)
- Address challenging questions about racial equity and educate others about the topic.



What We Have Learned



- Implicit bias
- Racial disparities in the region
- Historical context
- Institutional and Structural Factors



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Seattle, with a large mountain (Mount Rainier) in the background. The city is densely packed with buildings and greenery. A large body of water is visible in the distance. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**How do we
respond when
facts aren't
enough?**



ACT: Communicating about Race



Affirm

Affirm means to “start with the heart,” engage the audience with emotional appeals, and explain how **people are in this together**.

Begin by affirming **core values** that your listener or audience shares with this effort. Reinforce the idea that **our goals are the same**.



Affirm Tips

- Use plain language
- Emphasize **shared values**
- Describe your **vision for our communities** and how that audience **fits into that vision**
- Use stories that are evocative and specific



Counter

Counter means to explain the problem and take on race directly.

Explain the challenge, focusing on the institutional and structural drivers that have **created and maintained racial inequity**. Be explicit about race, **contrasting reality with the vision and values you've shared**. Use facts & stories to persuade your listener of the reality and importance of the problem.



Counter Tips

- Be **explicit about race**
- Be clear about the structural story
- Employ facts and historical context
- Detail how **current reality differs** from the **shared vision**



Transform

Transform involves reframing winners and losers, and it ends with a message that binds the heart and a transformative **solution** that people want to **support**.

Reiterate that we're **all in this together** and offer your audience or listener a **concrete step** they can take, or we can take together to transform our current reality into the **vision we share**.



Transform Tips

- Appeal again to the heart
- Identify **root causes** of the problem
- Invite audience to make a choice or **take action**



Example of ACT

How do I get
over my fears
and prejudices?



Example of ACT: Affirm

Start with the heart

- “Thank you for being honest.”

Describe your vision and how the audience fits into that vision

- “This is one of the most important conversations we have to have in this country.”

Explain how people are in this together

- “All people hold these fears and prejudices.”



Example of ACT: Counter

Use facts to explain the problem

- Most of our fears are unconscious.
- Vast majority of Black Americans are not involved in crime.
- Media overrepresents Black American crime. and underrepresents white American crime.
- Millions of white Americans live in places where they rarely see anyone of another race.



Example of ACT: Transform

Offer your audience a concrete step

- Get to know Black families.
- Turn off the news at night.
- Join a Black or interracial religious organization.
- Read about racial history.
- Foster conversations about race and prejudice.

Reiterate that we're all in this together

- In order to build unity across race, class, gender, etc., we must foster relationships.



Poll Questions



Myths about Race and the ACT response



Myth: Racism used to be a problem, but it doesn't have any impact on us today.

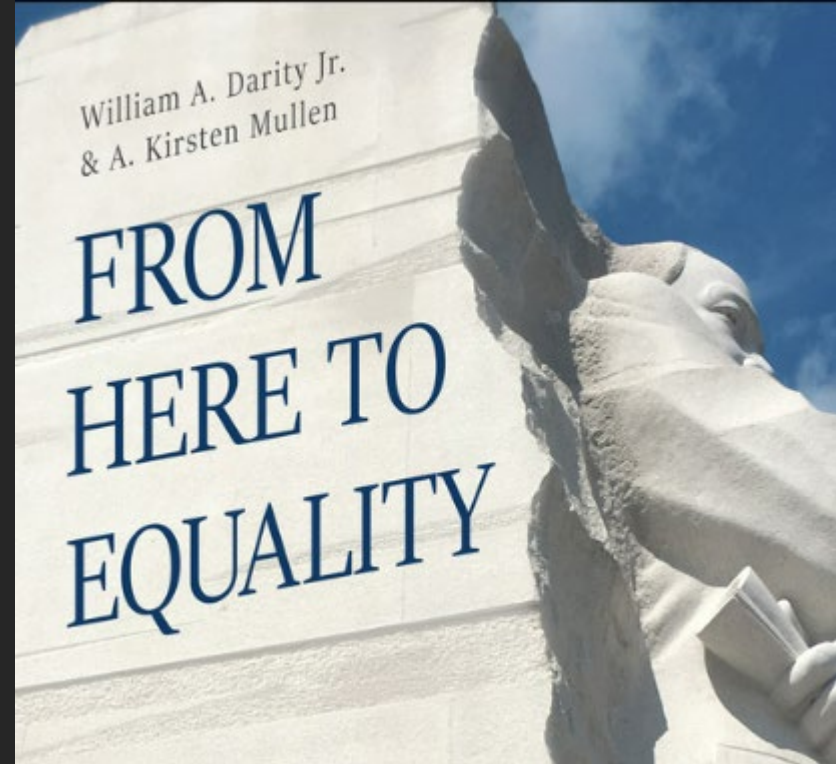


Homestead Act

Racial wealth disparities (e.g., **for every \$1 a white family has, a Black family has 10¢**) effectively capture and allow us to understand the cumulative impact of structural racism.

The Homestead Act enriched more than 1.6 million white families (native-born and immigrant) with land stolen from Native Americans. In 2000, there were 46 million descendants of these families (i.e., a quarter of the U.S. adult population).

White families are more likely to be in a financial position where they can provide their children with wealth-related intergenerational advantages (e.g., pay for college, live in high opportunity communities, leave an inheritance, etc.)

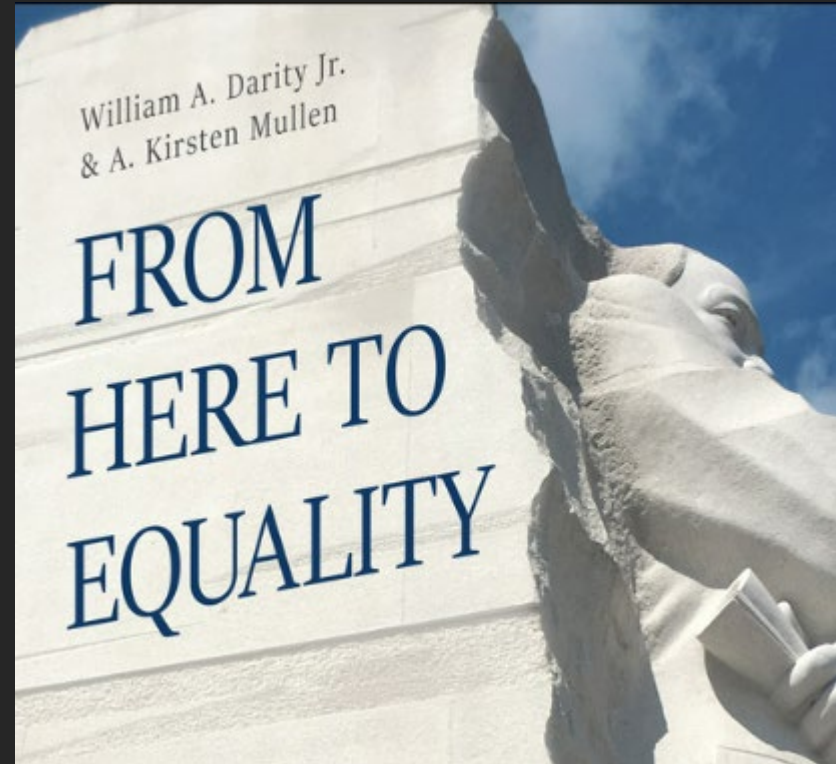


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Volunteers?



Myth: Racism used to be a problem, but it doesn't have any impact on us today.

Affirm: “Yes, racism used to be widespread, official policy of the US government. In many ways our country has made incredible progress in the last 75 years, as state and federal laws have been amended. In addition to the formal ways that racism negatively impacted our culture, economy and communities, explicit racism was also an unquestioned norm for most of our history.”



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Communicate
shared values

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Myth: Racism used to be a problem, but it doesn't have any impact on us today.

Counter: “While many explicitly racist laws have been overturned, the **impact of those laws and policies is profound**. Consider the wealth lost over generations because of policies like the **Homestead Act**, which enriched white families with **land stolen from Native Americans through threats of violence, forged signatures on treaties, etc.** The intergenerational wealth passed down from this land increases the likelihood that white families can **pay for college, live in high opportunity communities, leave an inheritance**, etc. And it's created significant racial wealth disparities. For example, did you know that **for every \$1 a white family has, a Black family has 10¢.**”



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Facts and historical context

How current reality differs from shared vision

Explicit about race



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Transform: “While we may wish that ending racism were as simple as changing explicitly racist laws, that's not nearly enough. **It's our job** as government leaders and workers to ensure that laws, policies and practices **explicitly advance racial equity** — that they intentionally drive equitable outcomes for people of color and reduce the impact of our history of racist policies. This is what we're attempting to accomplish with the **Regional Equity Strategy**. I hope you'll work with us to weave the resources included in this strategy into our **local plans to improve outcomes for all of our region's residents.**”



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Join us in
creating
shared vision

Concrete
steps they can
take

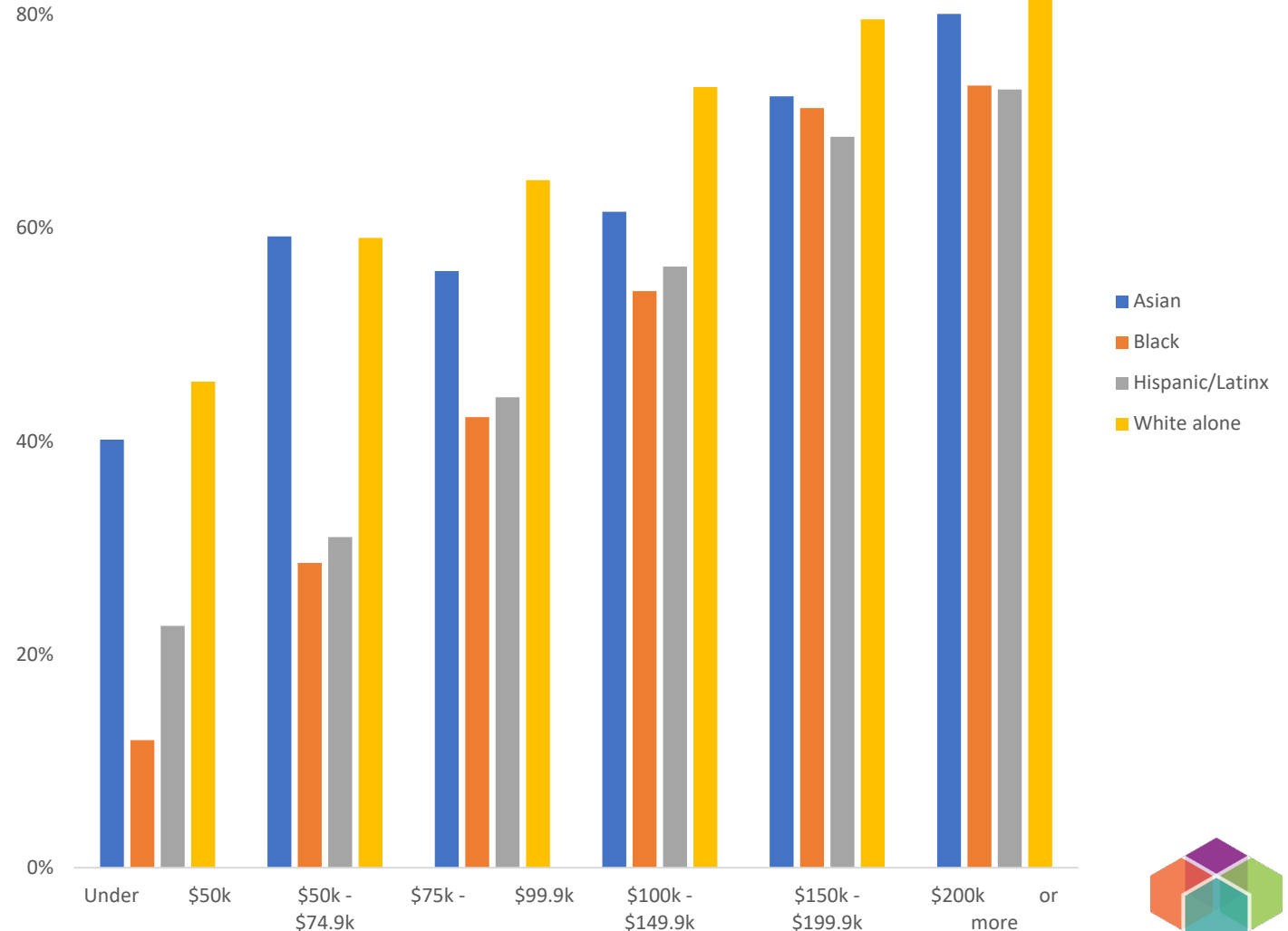


Myth: It's about
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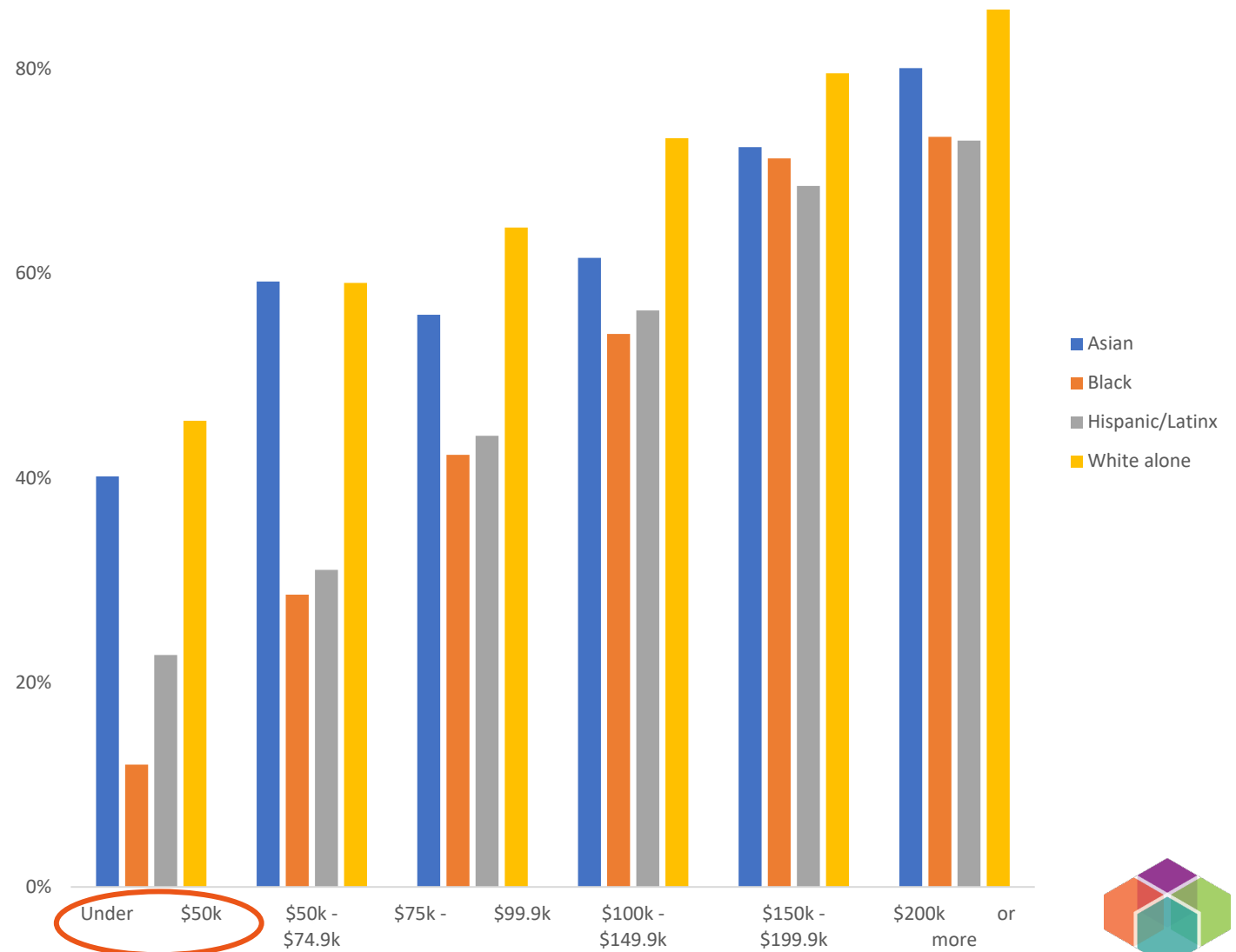
Homeownership Rates by Income and Race/Ethnicity

- Homeownership rates for people of color are much lower than rates for white households, even after controlling for household income
- If we solely focused on income, we would not capture these disparities and would never address the factors creating them



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Myth: It's about income inequality, not racial inequality.

Affirm: “Yes, financial resources are incredibly important — and deeply interwoven with issues of race. Having access to income is a critical factor in whether individuals struggle or thrive in our nation.”



Myth: It's about income inequality, not racial inequality.

Counter: “Limiting these conversations to topics related to income unfortunately hides the deep racial disparities we see across class lines. For example, many of us know that if you have less income, you are less likely to own a home. However, what some people don't know is that homeownership rates for people of color are much lower than rates for white households who are in the same income category. If we solely focused on income, we would not capture these disparities.”



Myth: It's about income inequality, not racial inequality.

Transform: “Recognizing the interconnected ways in which marginalization takes place will help to more effectively recognize and address hidden disparities like these. We’ve worked hard to include policies that can address these issues in our Regional Housing Strategy. I’m hoping that you will work with us to implement these policies so we can achieve equity for all our communities.”



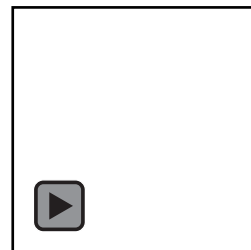
Myth: We should take
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Racist Messages Shape our Subconscious

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Schemas

Process for sorting information into broader categories subconsciously. Mental shortcuts that help us navigate the world efficiently.

The way our brains create shortcuts to quickly make sense of data is innate. The messages that shape the process are not.



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Myth: We should take a colorblind approach.
I don't even see race.

Affirm: “I completely agree that’s it’s imperative that we treat everyone fairly and strive not to discriminate against people based on their race or any other demographic background.”



Myth: We should take a colorblind approach. I don't even see race.

Counter: “However, refusing to acknowledge that we all see race and are impacted by implicit racial biases will only impede our ability to reach this goal. Our minds are wired to sort objects, like chairs, into categories. Although the way our brains create shortcuts to quickly make sense of data is natural, the way we've been influenced to sort people into categories is not. It is the result of racist and discriminatory messaging, policies and practices that we've been exposed to over time. Without these messages and policies, we wouldn't engage in this harmful behavior. Once again, the process is natural; the messages that shape the process are not.”



Myth: We should take a colorblind approach. I don't even see race.

Transform: “Because of this, it’s important that we talk about race, even though it can sometimes feel challenging. We need to both normalize conversations about race and implement strategies to advance racial equity. We need people like you to be actively engaged with us, supporting equity related policies and practices in VISION 2050.”



Poll Question



Breakout Room Agenda

- Pick an example provided to practice or come up with your own
 - Use slide deck to refresh your memory about ACT. It also includes data, history, and policies to help you respond to your myth.
- Practice **Affirm, Counter, and Transform** – Groups of 3 (11:10 – 11:30)
- Reconvene, report out – All (11:30 – 11:50)



Breakout Room Agenda

- **Need help?** Click the Ask for Help button to contact the meeting host and a PSRC staff person will briefly join your group to assist.
- **The breakout sessions will not be recorded.** Members of the public are welcome to call in to listen to a breakout session.
- **Any questions?**



Questions?

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