why we need to talk about racism and family homelessness

Marc Dones
Jeff Olivet
ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY

Sources of Vulnerability*

PERSONAL VULNERABILITIES
- low education, lack of skills
- generational, language (ESL),
- disability, women

DISRUPTIVE EVENTS
- migration, job loss, disability,
- family breakdown, illness,
- recession

LIFE STAGES
- children, youth,
- seniors, parents

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS
- household debt, access to services,
- asset-stripping, discrimination/racism,
- stagnant or low wages, credential recognition

Source: Calgary Poverty Initiative, 2013
It is time to name the problem we all know exists.
It is no accident that people of color are more likely to become homeless.
it is the result of racism.
DISPROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION
ACCORDING TO HUD

50+% of the total homeless population are minorities. More than 40% are African American.

African Americans are 3 times more likely than Whites to become homeless.

(HUD, 2015)
One study found that:

Blacks were 16x more likely than whites to live in shelters.

AND

Black children under 5 were 29x more likely than white children to end up in shelters.

(Culhane & Metraux, 1999)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Total US Population</th>
<th>Shelter Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, one race</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several races</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(HUD, 2015)
Among African Americans...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Population</th>
<th>Poverty Population</th>
<th>Homeless Family Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Carter, 2011; HUD, 2015)
“The Latino Paradox” (Gonzalez-Baker, 1996)
scoping review: 898 articles

- Mental Health/Substance Use: 32%
- Health: 42%
- Mental Health/Substance Use: 32%
- Housing: 6%
- Demographics: 8%
- Criminal Justice: 6%
- Trauma/Violence: 5%

(Center for Social Innovation, 2016)
A Historical Perspective
**American Slavery** 246 years

1619 1700 1800

**Segregation** 89 years

1865 1900 1954 2000
“Social and racial inequities are geographically inscribed.”

(Powell, 2003)
For 100 years, between 1870 and 1970, African Americans moved to the cities of the North and West.

Whites fled.
Volume I: Executive Summary

Report of the Secretary's Task Force on

Black & Minority Health

1985
In January 1984—ten months after becoming Secretary of Health and Human Services—I sent Health, United States, 1983 to the Congress. It was the annual report card on the health status of the American people.

That report—like its predecessors—documented significant progress: Americans were living longer, infant mortality had continued to decline—the overall American health picture showed almost uniform improvement.

But, and that "but" signaled a sad and significant fact; there was a continuing disparity in the burden of death and illness experienced by Blacks and other minority Americans as compared with our nation's population as a whole.
What has 30+ years of research has revealed?

Minority Stress
The **Stress** Concept

“any condition having the potential to arouse the adaptive machinery of the individual”

Pearlin, 1999
Interactions with society provide the individual with information on the construction of the world; health is compromised when such information is incongruent with the minority person’s experience in the world.

—Meyer, 2003
“We should reintegrate discussions of homelessness with those of persistent poverty. And in these discussions, the issue of race is unavoidable.”

(Hopper, 1995)
EQUALITY IS NOT EQUITY
what does this all mean?
What is our obligation in dismantling racism?
How do these responsibilities differ for white people and people of color?
What Can You Do About It?

1. Work to understand the problem more deeply
2. Consider your own biases
3. Examine the data—let us know what you find
4. Begin a dialogue in your agency/community
5. Call each other on racism when you see it
6. Set up structures to combat racism and discrimination in your agency (e.g., diversity officers/committees, staff training)
What We Are Doing

1. Mobilize partnerships
2. Review the research literature
3. Examine national and local data
4. Find interventions to adapt, then test and scale what works
5. Continue to educate people and to bear witness
References


