

# Racial Justice and Power-Sharing: The Heart of Leading Systems Change

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*“No one can define or measure justice, democracy, security, freedom, truth, or love. No one can define or measure any value. But if no one speaks up for them, if systems aren’t designed to produce them, if we don’t speak about them and point toward their presence or absence, they will cease to exist.”*

—Donella Meadows<sup>1(p177)</sup>

## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, practitioners will have learned the following core principles and capabilities to implement our approach, which are based on our experience working with over 100 health departments and public health organizations. These include:

- How to develop a shared analysis and expand our mental models regarding the manner in which power imbalances, racism, and other forms of oppression define and structure the systems that drive health.
- Attending to the work of “being” together, and not just “doing” together, as a way of deepening the relationships necessary to disrupt these patterns at the interpersonal, team, organizational, and community levels.
- Establishing change processes that embody a model of sharing power and shifting who represents and is leading transformation.

## INTRODUCTION

Picture any social system: A school system. A food system. A tax system. A workplace. A healthcare setting. A city. An economy. Now, picture who has the power to decide how these systems operate. Picture who benefits from the system, who is harmed by or bears the brunt of its failures. When you really think about it, the picture shows that those with the power to decide are often quite distant from those who experience the system's harms and burdens. Power—the ability to enact change in the system—is not justly shared. People who bear the brunt of broken, inequitable systems—people receiving poorer healthcare, living in lower-quality housing, working in high-risk jobs, attending lower-resourced schools, and living with pollution and climate impacts, and those who are incarcerated—are the furthest from formal centers of power. And all these dynamics are racialized.

The people, families, and communities experiencing systemic harms and lacking access to power are primarily Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other People of Color. And even when the system's harmful impacts and disempowerment are disproportionately felt by income, gender, sexuality, or other aspects of one's identity, the impacts are still racialized. All social systems have racially disparate outcomes.

Given that individual and community health status is determined by these living, working, and social conditions,<sup>2</sup> redressing disproportionate impacts and transforming these systems to be more equitable are central to achieving health equity. There is no question that the field of public health has this commitment<sup>3</sup> and has focused on improving the social determinants of health for several decades. Despite our best efforts, though, systems change to achieve health equity is often stymied by the same power imbalances and inequities that are present in the systems we seek to change; power structures resist change and hierarchies maintain privilege for some, at the expense of others. Systems function to reproduce the power dynamics by which they are structured. And these dynamics show up at every level of our systems change efforts—interpersonal, team, organizational, and community.

Because of the fundamental ways that these entrenched dynamics endure and impede our progress toward health equity, this chapter comes early in this book. Leaders who are designing systems change processes must begin by accounting for these dynamics at the outset—all other aspects of systems change leadership should flow from this. Our task is to attend to and overcome these patterns in order to change the policies; practices; relationships; resource flows; and deeply held assumptions, values, and norms that make up all systems, including the public health system.

In that spirit, this chapter describes how systems change leaders can place the values of racial justice and power-sharing at the heart of our practice, thereby shifting our own system in the process and supporting social movements to achieve systems change.

### Describing Our Values of Racial Justice and Power-Sharing

Before diving into the core principles and capabilities, we want to ground practitioners in our North Star of what it means to share power and achieve racial justice.

Racial justice, which we interchangeably use with racial equity, is about deliberately transforming our systems to proactively serve those who have been most harmed by structural racism. As an outcome, racial justice is achieved when one's racial or ethnic identity no longer systematically exposes them to risks or no longer grants them privileges with regard to socioeconomic and life outcomes. It is when the people who need resources the most are prioritized to receive those resources. As a process, racial justice occurs when those most impacted by historic and current structural inequities are leading or are meaningfully engaged in systems change efforts.

Key to achieving racial justice is overcoming structural racism—a system of advantage based on race<sup>4</sup> in which racism is baked into policies, processes, and culture, across institutions and society over time. It is the cumulative and compounded effects of an array of factors, including public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms that work in various and reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial inequity.<sup>5</sup>

We focus on dismantling racism and White supremacy because for nearly every indicator of health and well-being, there are differences by race, with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) consistently faring worse than Whites. This holds true even when you look within other demographic characteristics such as income or gender. We lead with racial justice because every system that enables access to opportunity, health, and belonging was designed to reproduce racial inequities and continues to do so in the post-Civil Rights Era ubiquitously and often invisibly. And we lead with racial justice because chronic experiences of racism directly cause health inequities through the body's elevated stress response and consequent overexposure to cortisol and other stress hormones, which disrupt and depress almost all the body's processes. Experiences of discrimination and racial trauma can have intergenerational impacts on a family's health.<sup>6</sup> Finally, we lead with racial justice because of the urgent need to reckon with the United States' founding history of colonialism, genocide, and racial slavery; its continuation through Jim Crow; and its modern-day manifestations and sequelae, from intergenerational and persistent health inequities to disproportionate policing, incarceration, and state violence against BIPOC communities.

Other systems of advantage or oppression are also important to address in systems change, as inequities persist along all dimensions of identity, including income, gender, sexuality, immigration status, and more. But centering racial justice in systems change also leads to shifts in all forms of marginalization and supremacy. Racial justice provides us with the culture change, tools, lessons, and strategies to also undo the harmful effects of capitalism, patriarchy, and other systems bound up in systemic racism that advantage some at the expense of others.

Power-sharing means widening—and shifting—the circle of people involved in systems change and in centering people who are most impacted by inequities. There are many frameworks to understand what “power” is and how it operates. Power manifests in how decisions are made, the people and networks involved in the decisions, how problems and solutions are framed, and what ideas are even considered in a process. It comes in the form of resources, access to decision-making, alliances and networks, and the dominant stories society chooses to tell about this nation and its people.

Many people think of power as the “power over” that is used to oppress and cause harm. It is true that power imbalances lead to one group’s enormous capacity to shape laws and government, dictate meaning, and actively repress anything that threatens their hold on that power. But as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “*Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. It is the strength required to bring about social, political, and economic change.*”<sup>7(p37)</sup> Power is not inherently good or bad—rather, its value depends on its locus, purpose, and manifestation. Perceiving power as “bad” can limit our ability to recognize that we have a role to play in pivoting its use toward good purposes. Systems change leaders must help groups clearly identify and perceive all of the locations and mechanisms of power, so that we can collectively and proactively use it to advance health equity.

Systems change is inherently about leveraging and shifting power within a system to bring about any desired change. Taking this a step further, the act of power-sharing must be understood as an end in and of itself in systems change. Given the manifold ways in which power-hoarding has led to systematic oppression of communities of color, the process of power-sharing in systems change helps set a new paradigm within the system itself. Any intervention to address structural racism is necessarily an intervention that shifts power.

## DEVELOPING A SHARED ANALYSIS OF HOW POWER, RACISM, AND OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION PATTERN OUR SYSTEMS TODAY

How we understand the world is driven by our own mental models—our identity, our experiences, and our social position in existing systems. Our country’s roots in White supremacy and racism have defined and limited our mental models. Brain science on implicit bias confirms that all our mental models and perceptions are limited by unconscious racial bias.<sup>8</sup> Coming together with others to develop a shared analysis of how a system operates is a hedge against any single entrenched or unconscious mental model dominating our systems change efforts. Indeed, developing a shared analysis of a system is a crucial first step of leading systems change and a prerequisite to developing solutions that actually solve systemic problems.

One aspect of unpacking our mental models and developing this shared analysis is understanding the “why” and the origin story of various systems’ inequitable functioning. Every upstream system that drives health—education, criminal legal, housing, economic, and others—has a story about power, racism, and/or some other form of exclusion playing a role in the system’s creation, function, and operation. To illustrate this, let’s walk through a few examples of how historically racialized policies in our employment and housing sectors continue to yield inequitable outcomes today. This is what we mean by collaboratively “developing a shared analysis” to shift our mental models.

The National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act—both cornerstones of employment and safety protections for workers today—have their roots in

the preservation of strict racist hierarchies. Passed in 1935, domestic and agricultural workers were explicitly left out of these federal labor and employment laws,<sup>9</sup> which guarantee the right of private sector employees to organize into unions, engage in collective bargaining, and take collective action such as strikes. While these laws protect the health of many American workers today, they continue to exclude many others. The exclusions were intentional, dating back to the New Deal Era when Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) made concessions to gain the votes of Southern lawmakers seeking to exclude majority Black domestic and agricultural workers from the landmark laws. The power these lawmakers exerted in the political system was inextricably linked to a racist ideology that devalued Black life, sought to enrich and empower Whites, and led to the creation and continuation of deep and entrenched inequities in occupational safety and health outcomes. These exclusions remain today, and the racialized impacts and health harms remain for the immigrant and Latinx populations who now make up the bulk of the domestic and agricultural workforce.

Similar patterns are evident in the Federal Housing Administration's (FHA) mortgage lending practices and policies dating to the 1930s. Celebrated for making homeownership accessible to White people by guaranteeing their loans, the FHA explicitly refused to back loans to Black people or those who lived near Black people.<sup>10</sup> These policies intentionally created wealth for White people while systematically excluding non-Whites from home ownership, with implications for accruing intergenerational wealth, accessing quality public schools, and producing urban disinvestment and segregation.

The dominant mental model regarding the New Deal is that FDR instituted labor, industrial, banking, housing, and other systems changes that helped end the Great Depression, reduced income inequality, and brought a generation into the middle class. But absent in this dominant story is how people of color, and specifically Black people, were systematically excluded from the benefits and intentionally harmed by these systems changes.

A creative and dynamic tool to help develop this kind of shared analysis is Lee Anne Bell's *Storytelling Project Model*<sup>11</sup>—the purpose of which is to help communities “discover, develop, and analyze stories about racism that can catalyze consciousness and commitment to action.”<sup>11(p8)</sup> It describes four types of stories: (a) stock stories, (b) concealed stories, (c) resistance stories, and (d) emerging/transforming stories. According to Bell, the four story types are “connected and mutually reinforcing. Each story type leads into the next in a cycle that fills out and expands our understanding of and ability to creatively challenge racism. The story types provide language and a framework for making sense of race and racism through exploring the genealogy of racism and the social stories that generate and reproduce it.”<sup>11(pp17-18)</sup> To learn more about the model and how to apply the tool, visit: <https://organizingengagement.org/models/storytelling-project-model/>.<sup>11</sup>

Explicitly establishing that racism is structural creates a necessary foundation for change. It pinpoints the national, state, and local histories that created the systems we seek to change and so points to specific solutions. It normalizes discussions and thoughts that some people might be thinking but are afraid to say aloud. It takes the onus off any single individual or community to raise the pain of these stories and

their impacts. It creates a “container” or process to name our individual and community experiences and validates the telling of those stories.

The legacy of racism, exclusion, and hoarding of power and resources is painful and lives in a deeply personal way in all of us today. To develop a shared analysis of the problem and its consequences and identify leverage points, systems change leaders must guide us to examine this history—and ask how these same dynamics influence the system today. As public health practitioners constantly seeking to “move upstream,” this process helps us dismantle the individual behavior change approach that has permeated and stymied our health discourse and practice for decades. It helps us shift our attention to the roots of the problem, see the whole system, and comprehend the scale of changes necessary to remedy inequities.

## CHANGING HOW WE “BE” TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM WHAT WE “DO” TOGETHER

*“Real change starts with recognizing that we are part of the systems we seek to change. The fear and distrust we seek to remedy also exist within us—as do the anger, sorrow, doubt, and frustration.”*

—Peter Senge, Hal Hamilton, and John Kania<sup>12(p29)</sup>

The same power dynamics and hierarchies that arrange value based on race, gender, class, and other dimensions of identity are present in the systems we want to change *and* in the interpersonal, team, organizational, and community relationships that drive systems change. Leaders of systems change are thus charged with transforming a seemingly “external” system, while also transforming the sociocultural dynamics—including ways of being in our teams—that we all have internalized and that block real transformation.

This may cause alarm for some public health practitioners: *If we aren’t about individual behavior change anymore, why are we focusing on changing people?* The answer is that systems leaders must foster collective leadership and ownership of the system and build the capacity of individuals, teams, and organizations to change the system. People created and maintain these systems, and it will take transformed people and relations to shift the systems. We need to shift people’s perspectives and relationships within the system because expanded perspectives and relationships allow us to enact systems change more profoundly and effectively, and ultimately make transformation stick.

The heart of this work, therefore, is to design change processes that *in and of themselves* challenge status quo dynamics—to support a different way of “being together” that prioritizes relationship development, trust building, and bringing our whole selves to the work of changing the systems. For us, this comes down to two core practices: (a) creating a “container” for our work together and (b) reintegrating the head and the heart. In short, these ideas are what we mean when we put the values of racial justice and power-sharing into practice in our relationships. Let’s dive into what this means.

## Creating a “Container” for Our Work Together

Systems leaders must create the conditions that give rise to change and allow change to become self-sustaining. In practice, we call this “creating a container for systems change processes.” Creating a container is about constructing a shared working and thinking space that allows for an equitable set of dynamics and culture to emerge to help us tackle complex problems. This container acknowledges that we are all harmed by unjust systems and prepares us to be simultaneously vulnerable, afraid, and brave.

In practice, the container is about:

- establishing collective practices for people to share their personal stories, identities, and vulnerabilities;
- creating group agreements to guide how people communicate with one another, especially on charged topics;
- explicitly naming and holding the physical and emotional dysregulation that invariably comes with doing racial justice and systems change work;
- giving room for a group to slow down and notice when they are having an emotional or body response to the content; and
- creating a “physical” space that grounds relationships, which includes accessible room set-up, welcoming music, what’s on the walls, shared food, and prioritizing time for wellness and joy.

To learn more about these practices, check out Human Impact Partners’ “Container Setting” tool in our health equity tools and resources: <https://humanimpact.org/products-resources/>.<sup>13</sup>

Attention to the container helps create an environment that humanizes the process and participants and builds greater social and emotional intelligence. It helps build trust among a group undertaking systems change, which is the foundation for greater innovation—and critical for overcoming public health’s risk aversion. As this is fundamentally counter to the “professional” culture into which many of us have been trained, it is also an interruption of the systemic status quo unto itself. Importantly, it is about creating a space for accountability for feedback mechanisms that are available to everyone, irrespective of the power they hold within the change process. A well-curated and held container creates processes and spaces where people feel they belong and where there is a shared set of rules and capacity to work through the interpersonal, team, and organizational conflict that is inherent in systems change.

## Reintegrating the Head and the Heart

Our commitment to racial justice also requires a capacity and willingness to feel the work we are doing—in an embodied sense, in addition to the intellectual. “Integrating the head and the heart” is a metaphor for making space in our work for the physical sensations and emotions that arise when we confront the reality of racial inequities and

unjust power imbalances, both in the policies and systems we want to shift and in our own organizational culture.

Public health has been acculturated to approach health equity work with a primary focus on policy change, planning, analyzing, and producing data—and other activities primarily “of the head.” In the United States, nearly all of us carry trauma in our bodies from racism and White supremacy. We have tended to suppress the visceral pain and trauma of living through, witnessing, and perpetuating systems of oppression and advantage. We must break down this false dichotomy between thinking and feeling. In practice, this means:

- developing an ever-evolving vocabulary and collective analysis about what it means to be heart-centered,
- normalizing the practice of noticing and being able to share whether we are emotionally regulated or not as we engage with this work,
- making space for shared reflection about how a body of work affects us as people,
- listening deeply to those who have been most impacted,
- considering how we ourselves have suffered the trauma of participating and living within harmful systems, and
- breathing together more, paying attention to how our bodies feel, and developing a vocabulary to express what’s happening there as we engage in this work.

To learn how to bring these practices into change processes, check out adrienne maree brown’s visionary book, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*,<sup>14</sup> at: [www.akpress.org/emergentstrategy.html](http://www.akpress.org/emergentstrategy.html). It is an excellent resource on inviting people engaged in systems change to “feel, map, assess, and learn from the swirling patterns around us in order to better understand and influence them as they happen.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Brené Brown’s seminal work on vulnerability, putting yourself out there, and courage are excellent resources—visit her extensive library of videos, tools, and resources here: <https://brenebrown.com/>.<sup>16</sup> The daring leading assessment tool and the workbook for groups to operationalize their values are particularly useful.

Systems change leaders understandably face significant pressures to succeed from stakeholders, all of whom leverage some form of power. The pressure to “act” or “do” is ever present, as people’s lives and well-being depend on transforming the conditions that cause harm. Leaders who are engaged in transformational work may believe resources are being “wasted” to dedicate valuable staff time to “internal work” that does not directly address community needs. But the dichotomy between internal practices and external work is a false one. We cannot achieve equitable outcomes without recognizing that power dynamics and structural racism rest on the formalization of often-undissected implicit interpersonal codes, workplace hierarchies, and professional practices that mirror and perpetuate inequities. Indeed, genuine systems change must begin within. Ultimately, we need to feel that trauma in order to bring our whole selves to systems change work with humility, vulnerability, and honesty.

Even in organizations working explicitly on racial justice and health equity, we have seen how harmful internal culture and practices can foment distrust between staff, leadership, organizations, and communities; derail plans; and waste substantial

resources and time. This leads to further demoralization, cynicism, loss of trust, and difficulty recruiting and retaining BIPOC staff and racial equity champions. A work culture that fosters ongoing reflection and collaboration and prioritizes the well-being of all participants and relationships is central to sustaining systems change efforts—not an optional “nice to have” or one-off. During this unprecedented year of a global pandemic, police murders and brutality, climate change impacts, and the rise of White supremacist extremist groups and militants, we have directly witnessed how investing in how we “be together” at work profoundly impacts our ability to weather the chaos, show up for each other, pivot in changing conditions, support social movements and power building, and continue to facilitate policy and systems change. When we establish new patterns of being together in our systems change efforts, we are better equipped to do “the work.”

## MODELING POWER-SHARING AND CENTERING THOSE MOST IMPACTED WITHIN THE SYSTEMS CHANGE PROCESS

Leading systems change thinker Donella Meadows instructs us to identify “leverage points” as the points of power in a given system.<sup>17</sup> Leverage points include the power to set the rules of the system, to change or evolve the structure of the system, to set the goals and paradigm of the system, and—most critically—to *transcend* the paradigm of the system.

Communities facing health and social inequities—for example, students in underperforming schools, families living in poor quality housing, workers subsisting on poverty wages, communities that are policed and incarcerated—rarely have access to these leverage points *by design*. Community engagement opportunities should define these leverage points and redistribute the power toward those who have been most disenfranchised.<sup>18</sup>

### Power-Sharing in the Systems Change Process Itself

In systems change processes, leaders have enormous ability to influence how power and leverage are exercised—for example, how we perceive the problem; how goals, rules, structure, and recourse are decided and by whom; the given options for systems change solutions; and how the paradigm or system will ultimately shift. Systems change efforts are relational and involve negotiations between actors and agents of change with varying degrees of power—supervisors and supervisees, public agencies and people who rely on public services, corporations and workers. Transforming systems requires transforming the balance of power and relationships among people who shape and experience the systems. One tool to do this is “power analysis” or “power mapping,” which helps those seeking social change to analyze who holds power over decision-making, the influence they have, and how to target them for change. To learn more about power analysis/mapping and see an example, visit: <https://commonslibrary.org/guide-power-mapping-and-analysis/>.<sup>19</sup>

A power-sharing approach to systems change requires systems actors to meaningfully shift their dominant role or position in the system, with some actors relinquishing control or authority and those with less leverage stepping into greater ownership and responsibility. A power-sharing approach reflects a more mutual and interdependent model for pulling on the levers of change, as opposed to sticking with an old paradigm of those with existing power continuing to dominate.

Ultimately, power-sharing means widening and shifting who is involved in sense-making, setting the rules of the system, and determining the set of options from which to choose (i.e., the paradigm of the system). Focusing on shifting power in systems change is necessary to ensure that other aspects of systems change—that is, changing policies, practices, resource flows, and norms—will ultimately be retained.

## Changing Who Is at the Table to Center Those Who Are Most Impacted

Power-sharing in systems change is inextricably tied to racial justice via who is represented in change processes. Changing who is at the systems change table—and transforming that table—is itself a strategy to remedy the historic and ongoing injustices that have intentionally excluded BIPOC from decision-making. In addition to this reparative effect, changing who is at the table has a substantive impact on the conversations we have, the choices we consider, and the transformation we pursue. It is about much more than representation—it is about bringing deep expertise, specificity, and definition of root causes and impacts to the systems change process.

Community power-building organizations (i.e., grassroots community organizations) that are made up of and represent people and communities most impacted by inequities are a natural ally for systems leaders seeking to change who is at the table, address racial inequities, and integrate a power-sharing model. Community power-building organizations focus on redistributing power and decision-making by building power in communities most impacted by economic, political, social, health, and other inequities. They use diverse tactics and movement strategies to engage communities, bring them together to build a shared analysis across their lived experiences and conditions, and take collective action. They understand the process of building power at a local scale, within historically marginalized communities, as having the potential to transform how decisions are made—by, with, and for whom—on a larger scale. See the article “Shifting and Sharing Power: Public Health’s Charge in Building Community Power” in *NACCHO Exchange* for seven concrete tips on how health departments can work with community power-building organizations: [www.humanimpact.org/shiftsharepower](http://www.humanimpact.org/shiftsharepower).<sup>20</sup>

What would it mean to bring formerly incarcerated people and abolitionists into discussions about policing and incarceration, or renters and unhoused people into discussions about housing affordability, or people experiencing wage theft into discussions about regulating workplaces? The expertise and specific information of their navigation of systems and experiences will lead the way to transformative solutions. These may not be easy solutions to implement—but then, if they were, they wouldn’t be transformative.

## A NEW PARADIGM TO STRUCTURE OUR SYSTEMS

In this chapter, we've described what it means to place racial justice and power-sharing at the heart of systems change. In practice, this is about creating a shared analysis of how racism, power imbalances, and other forms of oppression structure our systems today; about changing how we are in relationship with one another and with ourselves; and about modeling power-sharing and centering the voices of people who have been most impacted by the systems we seek to change. This topic has many more aspects than we were able to cover in one chapter, but we believe these are the core capabilities central to leading effective and transformative systems change at the interpersonal, team, organizational, and community levels.

We are in the midst of a racial reckoning in this country, and too many people have been killed, injured, and harmed by unjust systems. Yet, because of the powerful racial justice movement work of BIPOC communities, we are also seeing unprecedented support for the movement for Black liberation, along with long-overdue introspection by many White people about their complicity in unjust systems and the necessity to be proactively antiracist. Because racism so deeply structures all systems, we *cannot* transform systems without this reckoning. And we need a vast network of brave systems change leaders and movers to guide us toward truth and reconciliation, justice, health, and abundance.

This is a process with no end, and no set arrival point. It is a constant state of change that adapts to new information and that gains wisdom and insight from dynamic conditions and perspectives. It acknowledges the status quo and opposing racist forces working to block equity-driven systems change. Conflict is inherent to this process of transformation and should be welcomed as a sign of change and growth. Shifting power to be collectively dispersed across people and communities and toppling the hierarchies that assign value based on identity or social positionality is no easy process. But our mutual liberation and transformation depends on it.

### CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter walks through how systems change leaders can place the values of power-sharing and racial justice at the heart of our systems change practices. Readers will understand the importance of a key set of core principles and capabilities central to leading effective and transformative systems change at the interpersonal, team, organizational, and community levels.

### Key Messages

1. It is critical to expand our mental models and develop a shared analysis about how power imbalances, racism, and other forms of oppression define and pattern the systems that drive health.

2. We must attend to the work of “being” together and not just “doing” together as an important way of deepening the relationships necessary to disrupt these patterns at the interpersonal, team, organizational, and community levels.
3. We must establish change processes that are themselves a model of sharing power and shifting who represents and is leading transformation of our systems.

## Tips

In order to operationalize these principles and capabilities, we offer these practical tips:

- Facilitate processes for groups engaged in systems change processes to examine the histories of racism, power imbalances, supremacy, and harm—and ask how these same dynamics influence the system today—to develop a shared analysis of the problem and its consequences and to identify leverage points.
- Create a container for systems change processes—a shared working and thinking space that allows for a different set of relational dynamics and culture to emerge, which can help tackle complex problems.
- “Integrate the head and the heart” to make space alongside our intellectual work to feel the physical sensations and emotions that arise when confronting the reality of racial inequities and unjust power imbalances—both in the policies and systems we aim to shift and in our own organizational culture.
- Adopt a power-sharing approach, where systems actors shift their dominant role, positionality, or component of the system, often relinquishing control and authority. This means taking a more mutual and interdependent approach and opening up opportunities for those with less leverage and power to step into greater ownership and responsibility.
- Change who is at the table to directly address racial inequities and integrate a power-sharing model by forging long-term relationships with community power-building organizations that often represent and are made up of people and communities most impacted by inequities.

## Supplemental Resources

- Lee Ann Bell. *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*. Available at: [www.routledge.com/Storytelling-for-Social-Justice-Connecting-Narrative-and-the-Arts-in-Antiracist/Bell/p/book/9781138292802](http://www.routledge.com/Storytelling-for-Social-Justice-Connecting-Narrative-and-the-Arts-in-Antiracist/Bell/p/book/9781138292802)
- adrienne maree brown. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Available at: [www.akpress.org/emergentstrategy.html](http://www.akpress.org/emergentstrategy.html)
- Brené Brown, LLC. *Dare to Lead Hub*. Available at: [brenebrown.com/](http://brenebrown.com/)
- Cyndi Suarez. *The Power Manual: How to Master Complex Power Dynamics*. Available at: [www.cyndisuarez.com/](http://www.cyndisuarez.com/)
- Grassroots Policy Project. *The Three Faces of Power*. Available at: [www.grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GPP\\_34FacesOfPower.pdf](http://www.grassrootspolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GPP_34FacesOfPower.pdf)

- Human Impact Partners. *Heart-Centered Practice: Embodying a Racial Justice Framework*. Available at: [www.humanimpact-hip.medium.com/heart-centered-practice-embodying-a-racial-justice-framework-1e8b32d0e7d](http://www.humanimpact-hip.medium.com/heart-centered-practice-embodying-a-racial-justice-framework-1e8b32d0e7d)
- Human Impact Partners. *Shifting and Sharing Power: Public Health's Charge in Building Community Power*. NACCHO Exchange. Available at: [www.humanimpact.org/shiftsharepower](http://www.humanimpact.org/shiftsharepower)
- Human Impact Partners. *Health Equity Tools*. Available at: [www.humanimpact.org/products-resources/issue-area/?filter=iss1-145](http://www.humanimpact.org/products-resources/issue-area/?filter=iss1-145)
- Racial Equity Institute. *The Groundwater Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism*. Available at: [www.racialequityinstitute.com/groundwaterapproach](http://www.racialequityinstitute.com/groundwaterapproach)
- Smithsonian Magazine. *158 Resources to Understand Racism in America*. Available at: [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/158-resources-understanding-systemic-racism-america-180975029/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/158-resources-understanding-systemic-racism-america-180975029/)

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3. *10 Essential Public Health Services*. de Beaumont Foundation and Public Health National Center for Innovations. <https://spark.adobe.com/page/Qy1veOhGWyeu5/>. Accessed February 9, 2021.
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## **DIGITAL ONLY**

### **ABSTRACT**

This chapter describes how systems change leaders can place the values of racial justice and power-sharing at the heart of practice, thereby shifting our own system in the process and supporting social movements to achieve systems change. It describes the following core principles and capabilities to implement this kind of approach: (1) How to develop a shared analysis and expand our mental models about how power imbalances, racism, and other forms of oppression define and structure the systems that drive health. (2) Attend to the work of ‘being’ together, and not just “doing” together, as a way of deepening the relationships necessary to disrupt these patterns at the interpersonal, team, organizational, and community levels. (3) Establish change processes that embody a model of sharing power and shifting who is represented in and leading transformation.

### **MESH TERMS**

Change Management; Empowerment; Interpersonal Relations; Leadership; Models, Psychological; Organizations; Political Activism; Power, Psychological; Racism; Social Justice

### **KEY WORDS**

change process; community; mental models; organizational; power-sharing; racial justice; racism; social movements; systems change leaders; team