

**COMPANION NOTES 01**

# WHY WE NEED TO GO BEYOND DIVERSITY

**Home Truths 2 - Race Equity Series**  
For the anti-racist curious

**ADVISORY NOTICE**

Racism is complex. There is no simple fix. We recommend that these companion notes be read reflectively. And please aim high to help mainstream civil society play its part in building a life-affirming anti-racist future.

## Key points

**1**

To address racism in civil society will take more than a focus on diversity and forms of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

**2**

Diversity or Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can change who works for an organisation but not change the organisation, e.g. in terms of how it supports Black and Minoritised Ethnic people in society

**3**

Focusing on anti-racism and race equity can enable more direct work to change institutional values, structures and behaviours that underlie racist harms and help to achieve more equitable outcomes

**4**

Organisations seeking to do serious work on anti-racism and race equity are building foundations for change, such as folding anti-racism and race equity into their future purpose

## Introduction

Diversity and broader notions of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are commonly used terms in mainstream civil society, yet they can fall short in addressing the sector's problems with racism. And they may not help the advancement of life-affirming and equitable goals.

In Home Truths 2, we focus on advancing anti-racism – the proactive practice of identifying and ending racism by changing values, structures and behaviours; and race equity – removing racial disparities and breaking the link between life outcomes and 'race' or ethnicity.

Language matters, but it doesn't do the job on its own. Organisations that work to enhance diversity or Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can still make advances on anti-racist and race equity goals. By the same token, there are no guarantees that institutions that use the language of anti-racism will live up to their words. **One way or another, there is real work to be done.**

## When diversity doesn't deliver

Efforts for diversity and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can leave intact the underlying problems of racism in civil society and beyond. The approach can fall short for a number of reasons.

### DIVERSITY OVER EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity often comes along with Equity and Inclusion.

Equity refers to ending patterns of racial and other group-based disparities. And inclusion points to the range of behaviours and practices that foster equity, e.g., treating some minoritised populations differently in the name of more equitable outcomes.

Despite being part of this triumvirate, it is diversity that tends to draw the most attention. That is in part because meaningful equity and inclusion require deep-seated change in an organisation and results can be slow to emerge. Diversifying an organisational workforce is potentially quicker and more visible.

But, as [research by Home Truths 2](#) shows, the fact that an organisation has ethnically diverse people within says little about anti-racist and race equity practice. And bringing additional Black and Minoritised Ethnic people into hostile or unsupportive environments can lead to additional racialised harm.

### THE WORKFORCE CHANGES – THE WORK DOESN'T

Where there is a push for greater ethnic diversity in civil society it may change who does some of the work. But it may have little bearing on what the work is.

In too many cases, as shown during the Covid period, a 'civil-society-as-usual' approach – including on funding – can leave Black and Minoritised Ethnic populations seriously [under-served and directly or indirectly harmed](#).

Only fundamental changes to the work in the world undertaken by civil society will end racism and do more to support Black and Minoritised Ethnic populations.

### RACISM: THE ELEPHANT IN THE SECTOR

In civil and wider society there can be a reluctance to face the realities of racism. As one participant in the original [Home Truths](#) programme put it:

***"When it comes to a conversation on racism, it's so easy to lose the focus on it, ... where you started talking about racism and somehow you end up talking about something else."***

The drift above occurs because some people in mainstream civil society feel uncomfortable talking about racism. Perhaps because they see themselves or the sector as the 'good guys'. Perhaps because some white people may feel unsettled at the prospect that they have benefitted from racism.

The language of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can bypass questions of racism. And avoid the inconvenient truth that underneath a lack of ethnic diversity in mainstream civil society is a racism problem.



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## OTHERING

Strictly speaking, diversity measures the extent to which a population, like a workforce or society as a whole, contains various elements of human difference. That includes ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, 'disability' and so on.

However, diversity has a tendency to be defined not in terms of a population but used as a label to categorise specific types of people. These people, e.g., 'queer' people or Black people, come to embody 'difference' in ways that can mark them as somehow (and perhaps forever) outside of what is 'normal'. Therefore, without careful application, the idea of diversity ends up reinforcing otherness and working against a sense of shared humanity, collectivity and belonging.

## The turn towards anti-racism and race equity

**Anti-racism is the proactive practice of identifying and ending racism by changing contributing values, structures and behaviours. It recognises that racism with its associated harms for Black and Minoritised Ethnic people and help for white people can only be addressed directly and vigorously.**

Race equity builds on anti-racism. Specifically, race equity is the process of ending racial disparities and breaking the connection between life outcomes and 'race' or ethnicity. It should also be about more than spreading 'misery' evenly and instead aim to enable all people to live well. An implication of race equity is that people need to be treated in an appropriate way – not necessarily in the same way – in order to secure good and equitable outcomes for all.

TABLE 1: RELATIVE FOCAL POINTS

Narrow diversity	Anti-racism and race equity
Inside the institution	Inside and outside the institution
Opportunities and access	Outcomes
Time-limited	Ongoing

As the table above captures, compared to narrow diversity (or narrow Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) anti-racism and race equity have different focal points. It is interested in the makeup of the workforce inside institutions but perhaps more important is the work that the organisation does in the outside world to serve and support Black and Minoritised Ethnic and other marginalised populations.

Similarly, narrow diversity may prioritise equal opportunities and access for Black and Minoritised Ethnic people to jobs within and services provided by civil society organisations. But anti-racism and race equity is more centred on securing good outcomes for Black and Minoritised Ethnic (and all) people.

In addition, if narrow diversity is about more proportionate opportunity and access for Black and Minoritised Ethnic people there can come a moment when an organisation decides they are getting things 'about right'. The effort can be time-limited. Anti-racism and race equity and overturning deep-seated ways of thinking and multi-institutionalised racist practice is ongoing work with no fixed endpoint.

## Firm foundations

The switch from diversity or Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to anti-racism and race equity will not just happen. It needs solid foundations - including some of the following.

### PROBLEM

James Baldwin argued that: "...**nothing can be changed until it is faced**".

By this he meant that facing difficult issues is a prerequisite for social change.

Some civil society organisations are writing themselves into the story of racism. For example, the Wellcome Trust said the following:

***"Wellcome has perpetuated racism as a funder, as an employer, and as a museum and library. Our founder, Henry Wellcome, owed much of his wealth and many items in his collection to colonialism, and our museum and library have enshrined racist systems of knowledge. Our organisation has also played a part in sustaining barriers to inclusive research, including by producing and sustaining racial inequity."***

Putting such ideas in the public domain can help to prepare the ground for serious and restorative change and introduce a measure of accountability for progress.

### PROCESS

Whereas institutionalised racism sidelines the experience and wisdom of Black and Minoritised Ethnic people, institutionalised anti-racism ought to bring these to the fore.

Bond and other organisations have worked to open up the process of moving towards anti-racism. The [Bond People of Colour in Development Working Group](#), drawn from people working across the UK charity sector in various roles and organisations, has been central to guiding their change efforts.

Such collectives can allow Black and Minoritised Ethnic people to come together, share experiences, learning and wisdom. They can

also help to challenge, hold to account and influence mainstream civil society. And mainstream organisations intent on serious anti-racist and race equity work will understand that those who have failed or not done enough on racism cannot do the work of transformation alone.

### POWER AND POLITICS

Racism is a political phenomenon. It is about power and resources. It lifts up some populations and downgrades others. It defines who is deemed worthy and unworthy of a place in a society, territory or institution; who will receive protection and who will be subject to unusual punishment and control.

Our Home Truths 2 [Chatham House event](#) with anti-racist and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion leads shows that those employed to meaningfully change institutions can face strong internal resistance and counter-efforts. This is a reminder that anti-racism and race equity efforts need new forms of politics and power structures to enable transformation.

The example of [Lankelly Chase](#) is one way for an organisation to unsettle prevailing civil society politics and power structures. As an independent charitable funder, Lankelly Chase has concluded that they are part of the problem they are trying to solve. They view traditional philanthropy as a '[function of colonial capitalism](#)' and have decided to relinquish their power, spend down their endowment and abolish themselves as an institution.

That approach has uncertain, but profound possibilities. It may also inspire other civil society institutions to consider what it looks like to let go of control and to give their power and resources over to build an anti-racist future.



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## PURPOSE

There are some organisations who have attempted to fold anti-racism and race equity into their purpose in order to better undertake their overall work. For example, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, recognising how poverty can be disproportionately experienced by many Black and Minoritised Ethnic populations, has [stated](#) that:



we cannot truly be an anti-poverty organisation, unless we are also an anti-racist organisation.

Elsewhere, [Mind says](#) that:

***"In the UK, race and mental health are closely linked. Systemic racism is detrimental to the mental health of Black people. Things have to change and that includes us."***

These types of purpose-connected approaches offer the promise that anti-racism and race equity efforts will become more than things that institutions do, and become part of who they are.

## Final words... for now

Switching civil society towards anti-racism and race equity is challenging. It requires stepping outside conventional knowhow and imagination. But it is possible to build solid foundations for transformation.

Ultimately, the language of anti-racism and race equity alone offers no guarantee of meaningful change. Whether under the heading of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion or anti-racism and race equity, what matters is purposeful, ambitious and practical life-affirming work. We are here to support these efforts

## Please send your ideas, trials and triumphs to:

[hometruthstwo@acevo.org.uk](mailto:hometruthstwo@acevo.org.uk)

We are interested in feedback on these Companion Notes and how we can make future editions as helpful as possible.

## Useful resources

As well as the links in the text you may find the following resources helpful:

Home Truths 2 (HT2) video catchup of session on [Why we need to move beyond diversity](#).

HT2's [Warm Words, Cold Comfort](#) podcast on civil society racism and signs of hope.

HT2 blog on [the precarious work of leading anti-racism in an organisation](#).

Bond/Lena Bheeroo's [Anti-racism and decolonising](#) guide for organisations.

Bond/Lena Bheeroo on [how racism manifests in NGO culture and the pitfall of EDI](#).

Forbes piece on the differences between [anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion](#).

Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust on [wealth and reparatory justice](#).

Liz Derias and Kad Smith on [building a pro-Black organisation](#).

Wellcome Trust's [anti-racist principles](#).