



**PRATT  
CENTER  
FOR**

**COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT**

**Racial Justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. It goes beyond anti-racism. It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures.**

Race Forward, "Race Reporting Guide"

**Racial justice is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.**

Applied Research Center & the Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity, "Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment"

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From its inception, Pratt Center's mission has centered on racial justice, and many staff members throughout the nearly six decades of our work have been tireless advocates calling on our organization, as well as our parent organization, Pratt Institute, to fully embody our commitment to co-creating a racially just world through all our practices.

Most recently, in the process leading up to the creation of this plan, the leadership of two staff members was especially critical, and we seek to acknowledge them here by name. Salvador Muñoz, officially a team-member from 2014-2019, was instrumental in moving Pratt Center staff to a more frontal and systematic examination of race. He led our involvement in Black Lives Matter (BLM) Pratt since its inception in 2016, including leading our programming contributions to the BLM Pratt Teach-Ins from 2017-2019. These efforts ignited internal conversations, and Sal was a key facilitator and advocate in our internal processes.

Alongside Sal, Sydney Céspedes, officially a team-member from 2015-2020, was a leader and significant contributor to the BLM Pratt 2018 and 2019 conversations, as well as an internal facilitator, advocate, researcher, and steward of our efforts at introspection and action. Sydney is the author and architect of this Racial Equity Action Plan and the facilitator of the process that led to its creation.

Through their efforts, the efforts of other staff of color, and the active participation and engagement of all Pratt Center staff, we undertook the steps detailed in this document, originally prepared for internal use. In the first external publication of this document in Spring 2020, we neglected to acknowledge the key contributions of Salvador Muñoz and Sydney Céspedes, resulting in an erasure of their outstanding leadership. We wish to acknowledge and apologize for the harmful impact of this unintended oversight.

# INTRODUCTION

Pratt Center for Community Development engaged in a series of racial equity (RE) workshops in the Spring of 2018, which were facilitated by Daniel Lim consulting, and included topics such as institutional racism, implicit bias, and white privilege. Pratt Center staff facilitated discussions in between workshops to advance the conversation. The purpose of this process was to:

1. Evaluate Pratt Center's commitment and values with respect to racial justice;
2. Establish a shared vocabulary and basic foundational knowledge around racial justice issues (key topics included defining race, structural racism, implicit bias, white fragility, whiteness, etc.);
3. Open a continuous dialogue about race equity work;
4. Incorporate lessons and suggested actions into strategic framework.

Over the Summer of 2019, Pratt Center staff collaborated to summarize a "one year review" of actions taken independently by staff to incorporate Racial Equity.

This document synthesizes the findings from the 2018-2019 one year review. It also builds off our 2018 racial justice organizational strategic planning by developing recommendations on how we can apply a RE lens to the way we operate as an organization, in decision-making, in program and project evaluation, and how we interact with colleagues and outside partners.

## A Note on Racial Equity Practice

There is no standard beginning, middle, and ending to this process. Once exposed to concepts of racial equity, each person will evolve in their understanding, capacity and knowledge of racial equity as conversations continue, plans are made and various strategies are implemented.

What is necessary for the successful evolution of our organization and of each individual is the expectation and understanding that periodic reflection on one's values and how they manifest into perceptions, attitudes, and judgments—prejudicial or not—is essential to our mission.

Pursuing racial equity means we will be uncomfortable and make mistakes along the way. Success happens when, through these mistakes and missteps, we gain the competencies, skills and language to engage in honest, thoughtful conversations with one another. Pratt Center must commit to building in the systems and processes to facilitate this self-reflection.

# ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE 2018

## 1. Hiring

Pratt Center staff across program and project areas reported speaking about Pratt Center's work through a racial equity lens. In particular, staff incorporated questions around racial equity during interviews with prospective candidates and graduate fellows. Additionally, staff incorporated race as one equity factor when considering a firm to implement our rebranding process.

Summary of Actions:

- Incorporated questions around how candidates define racial justice and incorporate it into their work into the search processes listed below, which resulted in net increase of POC staff.
  - Interns and Graduate Fellowship interviews
  - Hiring for Made in NYC manager
  - Operations Manager
  - Director of Policy and Planning interviews
- Implementation of a survey for incoming graduate fellow to evaluate RJ knowledge, vocabulary and cultural competency to understand what gaps exist and to address these gaps over the course of their fellowship
- Hired POC-led design firm to develop Pratt Center's new visual identity

## 2. Senior Leadership

The management team convened “Friends of Pratt Center” – a group of allies that will assist Pratt Center in developing a clear mission, scope and strategy to ensure staff is accountable to the communities we serve, and to further an inclusive work place culture and collaborative decision-making process. At this time, the racial composition of the advisory group include one Black advisor and two White advisors, therefore goals for diversifying the advisory board and intentional outreach is needed to develop a group that is truly reflective of the communities we serve.

Over the spring and summer 2019, Pratt Center began conversations with several private planning, architecture, and engineering firms to better understand their interests and perspectives on diversifying the planning field. This work was a direct result of the internal racial equity work conducted in 2018 that identified the lack of racial representation for Black, Indigenous and POC in the planning field. Pratt Center then convened these firms on Nov 1, 2019 to talk about strategies for “diversifying the urban planning field.”

### Summary of Actions:

- Convened Friends of Pratt Center advisory board to hold our organization accountable to the communities we serve
- Interviewed 8 private planning firms over the summer to understand their practices around RE
- Launched a convening on Nov 1, 2019 with the same 8 firms interviewed
- Senior leadership has had initial conversations with the Institute about desired qualities and characteristics of an eventual new director of Pratt Center as it pertains to RE.

### 3. Programs, Projects, and Publications

In 2018 a Racial Justice workshop for our Graduate Student Fellows was introduced so that our fellows would have the same vocabulary and starting point to RJ as our staff.

Pratt Center launched a research project around understanding minority and women business enterprise (MWBE) for manufacturers to understand the specific needs and challenges to manufacturing businesses. The purpose of the research is to inform Made in NYC programming.

Made in NYC also implemented RE criteria by prioritizing POC members when implementing programming opportunities such as working with BRIC to launch a 2 min marketing video that costs thousands of dollars to produce but is offered free to participants. Additionally, Made in NYC focused monthly campaigns to uplift POC members during Black + Hispanic History Month.

Staff received a Taconic Fellowship and launched the Future Cities Fellowship, with Diversity Committee of the American Planning Association (DivComm) and the Octavia Project, to work with young women and gender non-conforming (GNC) POC youth to teach them about urban planning and work with these young people to produce games + activities to engage their peers in urban planning topics. Young people will run their game with high school students in Octavia Project's Summer Program in 2020. The purpose of the project is to introduce POC youth to the concept of urban planning as a means to diversify the planning field. The fellowship is a paid stipend opportunity for young people.

EnergyFit staff identified POC-led CBOs that work on energy efficiency to consider partnership once EnergyFit (EF) kicks off and with the purpose of providing access to monetary resources for EF work.

Pratt Center policy publications (*Flawed Findings Part I and II*, and *Public Action, Public Value*) incorporated explicit language describing the racial dimension of the problems in the current system and how the solutions proposed must incorporate a racial justice lens.

#### Summary of Actions:

- RJ Workshop for Graduate Student Fellows
- Made in NYC research on MWBEs to inform programming
- Prioritized POC members in Made in NYC opportunities that provide free resources to members
- Future Cities Fellowship – paid 5 women/ GNC youth of color to participate
- Intentional partnerships with POC led CBOs for EF work
- Heightened and explicit focus on racial justice and impacts of policy reports
- Monthly program development time slot set aside for RE equity discussion

# **ACTIONS WE ARE TAKING IN 2020**

The following actions are proposed based on best practices gleaned from an extensive review of resources, some of which are listed on page 10. The management team will support in the implementation of these actions:

## **1. Implement a racial equity and organizational culture assessment**

Launch a mandatory, anonymous survey to all full-time and part-time staff, to get a sense of our strengths and needs as we work towards building a staff that is competent in applying a RE lens to our work. The survey should assess:

- Organizational commitment to racial equity work
- Organizational culture
- Recruitment, hiring and retention of a diverse staff
- Accountability to and partnership with communities of color
- Ability to apply an anti-racist lens to programs, policy, advocacy and decision making

Findings from this assessment will be used by senior leadership to identify racial competency trainings for the entire staff and will inform further RE actions.



## 2. Develop a hiring protocol

A hiring protocol that centers racial equity could include:

- Standardization of interview process ensuring uniformity in screening procedures, interviews, exercises and questions—for every job candidate is a key way to ensure equity and fairness throughout all hiring processes
- Guidance on how to communicate the necessary steps, expected timeline and requirements from Pratt Institute to staff and hiring committee members so everyone understands the process.
  - Develop a checklist / guiding document with respect to process for hiring and timeline.
  - Build in time for staff to provide input on the language for job descriptions
  - Build in explicit ask for staff to share with their networks and personal contacts, provide template email they can build off of as well as social media templates.
- A standard description of our racial equity values and racial equity requirements that are embedded in job descriptions
- Require that at least 50% of candidates in the first round of interviews are POC / racially diverse candidates
- A list of vetted job boards & contacts for POC-led nonprofits and CBOs we would contact directly to share job description

## 3. Create an assessment process for projects and programs

Assessment would include a series of questions and a guided process for launch, ongoing evaluation and close out of projects, policy reports and programming. It would also include a process checklist that operationalizes collaboration through discussion at key points in a project's lifespan. The assessment could include the following components:

- Project launch - Invite all staff to an open meeting to present project, communicate goals, discuss challenges and gather input on racial equity objectives (with guided set of questions)
- Metrics / data development – build into the process a period for researching how to measure impact of work for particular project/issue area (consider tapping into fellows for support)
- Template documents – to support evaluation of projects that include stakeholder analysis, systems analysis, decision-making analysis and RE impact analysis, etc.

# SOURCES & RESOURCES

In preparing this plan, extensive research was conducted on best practices around institutionalizing racial equity in organizations. We have included some (but not all) of the resources we reviewed below with links.

## Organizational Development

### Racial Equity Transformation →

This report by public policy organization Demos provides helpful narrative on their process and lessons learned on their Racial Equity Transformation process. The four components in their process were foundational analysis, organizational assessment, learning, and implementation.

### Racial Equity Toolkit →

This toolkit by Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative lays out a process and set of questions to guide development of policies, initiatives, programs, etc. and impact on racial equity.

### Organizational Race Equity Toolkit →

A comprehensive document by Washington Race, Equity, & Justice Initiative to guide legal aid organizations in incorporating racial equity. Page 114 includes an extensive racial equity resource list.

## Programs and Policies

### Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide →

This guide by The Annie E. Casey Foundation provides 7 steps to evaluate policy and program development.

### Racial Equity Impact Assessment Guide →

This guide by Race Forward provides sample questions to use to anticipate, assess and prevent potential adverse consequences on proposed actions.

### Equity Impact Review Process Overview →

A 5-phase evaluation process developed by King County (Washington) in 2015 (and updated in 2016) to ensure that equity impacts are rigorously and holistically considered and advanced in the design and implementation of a proposed planning or policy action.

# Organizational Assessment Tools

## Racial Justice Organizational Assessment →

A tool by Western States Center for assessing the degree of an organization's engagement with racial equality. Includes a red / yellow / green light rating system coupled with assessment questions.

## Organizational Race Equity Assessment →

Racial equity assessment created by Washington Race Equity & Justice Initiative for organizations and grounded in literature focused on organizational change and race equity.

## Race Matters: Organizational Self-Assessment →

An example by the Annie E. Casey Foundation of an organizational assessment on stage competencies and organizational operations.

# Culture

## White Dominant Culture and Something Different →

A worksheet adapted from "White Supremacy Culture" → by Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones

**RACIAL EQUITY  
ACTION PLAN**

**FEBRUARY 2020**



**PRATT  
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