

The Center's Journey of Racial Equity Transformation

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THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL &
TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY CENTER

About Us



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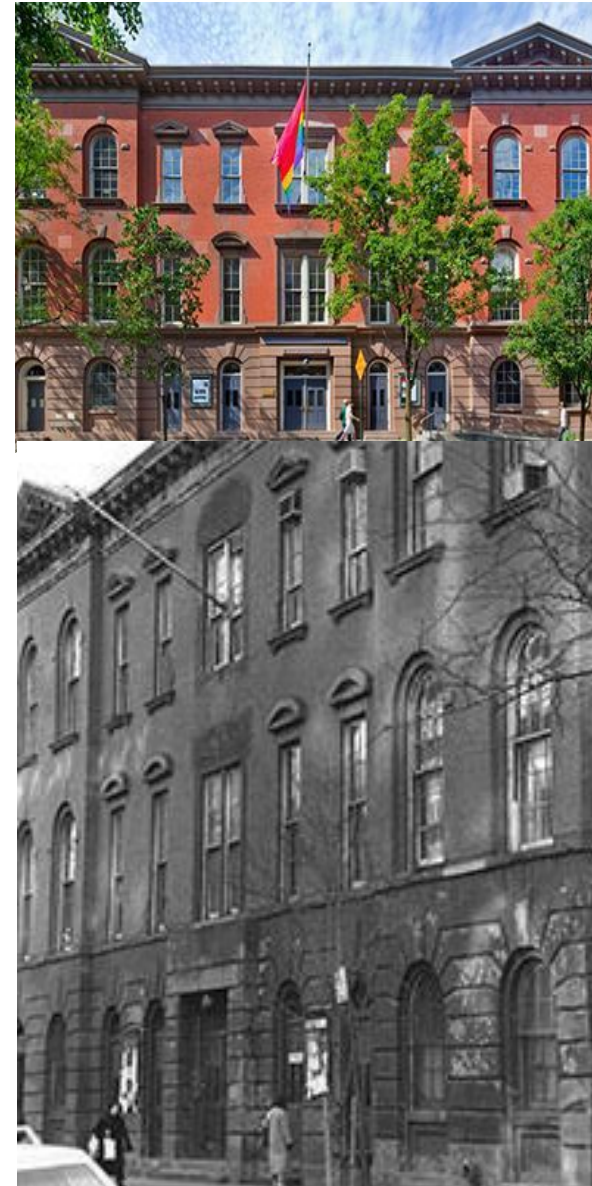
Land Acknowledgement

The Center acknowledges that it is situated on the homeland of the Lenape people past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout generations.

The name Manhattan derives from the Lenape word for island - “Menatay”.

It is important to acknowledge this as we engage in a discussion about justice, equity, diversity and inclusion as it is an acknowledgement of power and access.

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Overview of today's conversation

- The Center's Racial Equity Transformation Journey the past 5 years
- Shifting the paradigm in our program services
- Tensions in this work
- Questions

Racial Equity Journey

Race equity vision

The LGBTQ community experiences equity in health, justice, opportunity, and success outcomes.

By...

Addressing the implicit and explicit ways racism impacts individuals, organizations, and communities

Investing in and focus on equity and inclusion frameworks, practices, and policies

Ensuring our programs and services are accessible, affirming, inclusive, and responsive to community needs

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Levers of change



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Adapted from Equity in the Center's Awake to Woke to Work framework for building a race equity culture (<https://equityinthecenter.org/aww/>)

Evolution of The Center's Race Equity Work

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All staff race equity training with Race Forward.	<i>[Ad hoc efforts]</i> Racial Equity Working Group launched.	SLT attended race equity summit with Equity in the Center.	Launch Partnered with Change Elemental. Formed Racial Equity Steering Committee (RESC). Design assessment of individual & institutional level: document review, interviews, focus groups, & surveys. Coaching sessions for leadership and RESC.	Org assessment Conducted the org assessment and determined pathways forward. Alignment & training sessions with the Board, SLT, and RESC - focused on making meaning from the assessment findings. Board Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) launched. Racial Identity Caucuses began.

Evolution of The Center's Race Equity Work (cont'd)

2021	2022	2023
Strategy development Developed multi-year strategy and implementation plan to address "pathways forward" identified in assessment. The RESC concludes their work. Formed staff roles dedicated to equity. Four implementation teams launch: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communications• Education• Identity• Reflection	Implementation begins Identity team develops organizational values with feedback from staff, board, community, and stakeholders. Comms team develops plan for communications & messaging around our race equity work. Education team develops & implements all-staff equity training. Reflection team designs processes for reflecting on our equity work. People/HR equity work begins, in partnership with consultants at Unbrand. TGNC affinity group launches.	Implementation cont'd Board REWG becomes a permanent committee (REC) and plans annual Board Retreat with equity training. Implement 360 performance reviews. Core competency model and compensation policy in development. TGNC benefit enhancements planning for 2023-2024.

Ad hoc efforts (2016-2018)

- All staff racial equity training with Race Forward
- Staff committee - Racial Equity Working Group
- Demographic data collection
- Training for leadership with Equity in the Center
- Leadership team created Race Equity Case statement to align on why racial equity work is mission fulfillment work as an LGBTQ+ organization

Why must The Center focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) with a specific focus on racial equity?

Mission fulfillment.

The Center was born of community activism in response to the AIDS epidemic, ensuring a place for LGBTQ people to access information, care, and support that they were not receiving elsewhere. We opened in 1983 to help people who had doors constantly closed in their faces, ostracized by family, friends, and shunned by the general society. Since that time, we have continually provided a wide array of services and programs to serve our community, with an intentional focus on providing support to those who are most vulnerable. We have always taken great care to be a space that responds to community need; engaging in this diversity, equity and inclusion work is another outgrowth of those ongoing efforts. The vast majority of our clients also identify as people of color, and are directly and persistently impacted by systemic racism and economic injustice. For our programs and services to be successful, it is imperative that we recognize the effects and pervasiveness of racism and how it impacts our community, including impacts on the staff who may also be subjected to the pervasive impacts of racism on a daily basis.

We are firmly committed to fulfilling our mission.¹ To truly help LGBTQ individuals and our diverse community achieve parity in health, justice, opportunity and success outcomes, our organization must hold a strong foundation and competency in, as well as invest organizational focus on, equity and inclusion frameworks, practices and policies. We must do so with a specific intention to address the implicit and explicit ways in which racism impacts individuals, organizations and communities. To achieve this, we must recognize and address the intersectional² nature of our individual and collective experience, and proactively address the myriad of systemic barriers and oppressions individuals face, including racism. These conversations and work must begin internally with staff, and then be translated into all of the work we do to serve community, such that we can have an impact on the greater environment from which these inequities stem.

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Launch (2019)

- Racial equity work named as a priority by leadership
- Partnered with Sheryl Petty and Change Elemental
- Formed Racial Equity Steering Committee (RESC)
- Coaching sessions for leadership and RESC



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Organizational Assessment (2020)

- Change Elemental and RESC conducted organizational assessment
 - Org assessment included interviews, focus groups and surveys of staff, Board and community members
- Determined 7 pathways forward:
 - Focus on healing and (re)building trust
 - Clarify our organizational identity and decide who The Center wants to be
 - Clarify communications, transparency, and approaches to sharing data
 - Deepen and strengthen leadership racial equity capacity, will, skills, trust, & structures
 - Education: Deepen, complement, and leverage staff's racial equity capacity
 - Staff development and support
 - Embed equity into our structures and assess impact
- Alignment and training sessions with SLT, RESC and the Board - focused on making meaning from the assessment findings
- Board Racial Equity Working Group (REWG) launched

Racial Identity Caucus Launch (2020)

What are caucuses?

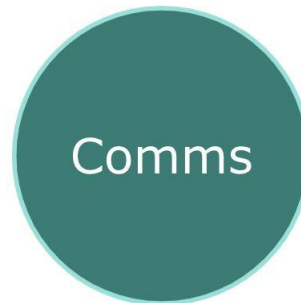
- All People of Color and White people are affected by racism and have to work together to end racism. However, we are affected by racism in very different ways, and so the work we have to do to end racism looks different.
- Caucuses provide times for People of Color and White People to meet separately in order to do our different work to dismantle racism and advance racial equity.
- There are 3 groups at The Center:
 - Black Caucus
 - BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) Caucus
 - White Caucus
- These are required learning/unlearning spaces for white staff, and optional support spaces for BIPOC staff.

Strategy Development (2021)

- Developed multi-year strategy and implementation plan to address “pathways forward” identified in assessment
- RESC concluded their work
- Formed new equity staff role - Senior Director, Equity and Learning
- Four implementation teams launch:
 - Communication
 - Education
 - Identity
 - Reflection



Clarify who we want to be as an organization, drafting values and identifying centered communities.



Craft a plan for internal and external communications & messaging around our race equity work.



Design and coordinate education & skill-building opportunities for staff.



Design processes for reflecting on our race equity work, assessing our impact, and recalibrating as needed.

Implementation (2022)

- Identity implementation team developed organizational values with feedback from staff, Board, community and stakeholders
- Communication implementation team developed plan for communications and messaging around our racial equity work. Continued work is embedded into comms and marketing team.
- Education implementation team developed and implemented all-staff equity training
- People & HR equity works begins in partnership with Unbrand
- TGNC affinity group launches

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Implementation (2023)

- Board REWG becomes a permanent committee (Racial Equity Committee) and plans annual Board Retreat with equity training
- Implement performance reviews with 360 feedback process - downward, upward and lateral feedback
- Employee handbook updates made with an equity and restorative justice lens (still in process)
- Core competency model and compensation policy in development
- TGNC benefit enhancements planned for 2023-24

The Programs Portfolio:

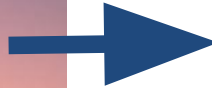
- Advocacy & Government Affair
 - Government Relations
 - RISE OUT Coalition
 - NYS LGBT HHS Network
- Arts & Culture
- Behavioral Health
 - Substance Treatment: Adult & Youth
 - Short-Term Mental Health Counseling
 - LIFT
- Community Programs
 - Youth Services
 - Economic Initiatives
 - HIV/Sexual Wellness
 - Case Management
 - Insurance Navigation
 - Social Support Groups



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Shifting the Paradigm

From Helping & Serving to Partnership & Collaboration

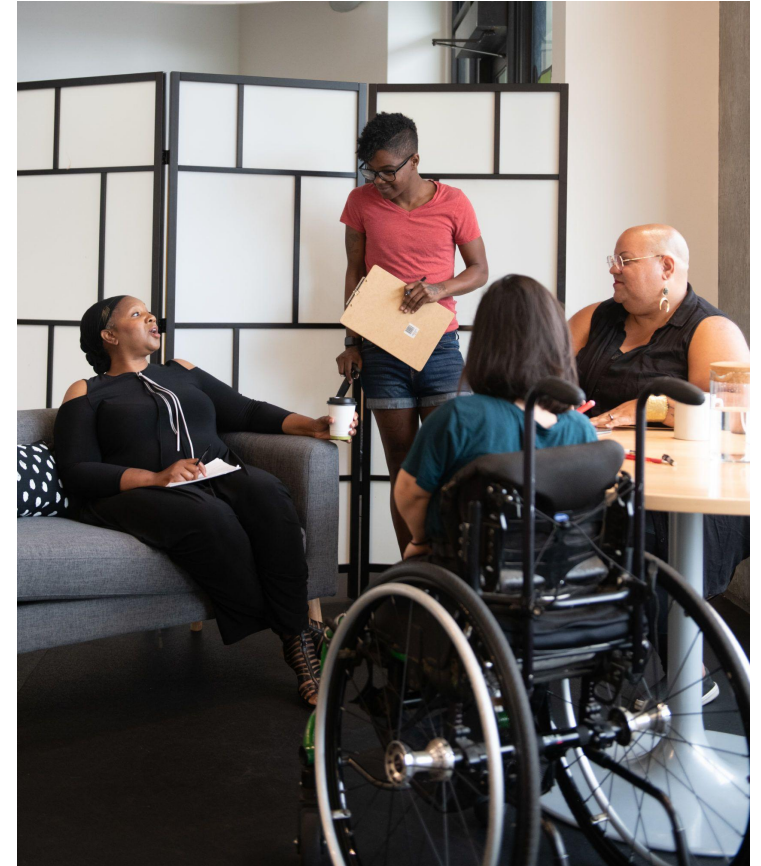


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CenterWorks

- Take a learner stance to understand the unique needs of BIPOC Queer Transgender and Gender Expansive Community Members.
- Design, incubate and assess strategies to propel the personal economies of community
 - Cornerstone Strategies:
 - Internship opportunities: GET IT Fellowship & SAFE 2
 - Employment Support Groups: Keys to Success
 - Entrepreneur Support: Community Markets
 - Structural Support: Access to clothing, name change support, head shots
 - Workforce Development Approaches:
 - Career Counseling
 - Resume/LinkedIn Profile development
 - Cultivate a network of LGBTQ affirming employers seeking to recruit.

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Tensions

Context of this work - overlapping crisis



Building Resilient Organizations

November 29, 2022

Building Resilient Organizations

Maurice Mitchell

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Courtesy of the Working Families Party

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Common Trends

1. Neoliberal Identity
2. Maximalism
3. Anti-Leadership Attitudes
4. Anti-Institutional Sentiments
5. Cherry-Picking Arguments
6. Glass Houses
7. The Small War
8. Unanchored care
9. Disproportionality
10. Activist Culture

Trends we see at The Center

- **Neoliberal identity** - Using one's identity or personal experience as a justification for a political position.
 - Marginalized identity is deployed as a conveyor of a strategic truth that must simply be accepted....historically privileged identities are essentialized, flattened and frequently dismissed.
- **Maximalism** - Considering anything less than the most idealist position a betrayal of core values and evidence of corruption, cowardness, lack of commitment, or vision. Relatedly, a righteous refusal to engage with people who do not already share our views and values.
- **Anti-Leadership Attitudes** - Holding skepticism of leadership as a rule.
- **Anti-Institutional Sentiment** - Reflexively disdaining institutions and organizations as inherently oppressive and antiquated, including the institution one may be associated with.

Trends we see at The Center

- **Cherry-picking arguments** - Using incoherent or decontextualized arguments and perspectives to add perceived legitimacy to a position or oneself.
- **The Small War** - Elevating power dynamics at play among actors internal to a movement over the larger power dynamics in society. In nonprofits or social justice organizations, this often takes the shape of focusing on tensions playing out between junior staff and leadership.
- **Unanchored care** - Assuming one's mental, physical and spiritual health is the responsibility of the organization or collective space. The onus is on the organization to deal with the harm, burnout, or psychological stress one may experience through the work.
- **Disproportionality** - Being unable to interpret the scale of the problem.

Moving Forward

- Living our values
- Embedding this work into all areas of our work
- Launching “Center Insights” to create more transparency around decision-making
- Developing our managers
- Re-evaluate, learn, and adjust as needed - this isn’t a linear process

*“Finding authentic alignment and solidarity among diverse voices is serious labor.”
- Maurice Mitchell*



QUESTIONS?

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