

An  
**Anti-Racism**  
Companion  
Journal

Home Truths 2

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# An Anti-Racism Companion Journal

Home Truths 2

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# Home Truths 2

Home Truths 2 is a programme from ACEVO and Voice4Change England designed to challenge and support mainstream UK civil society to take serious practical action on anti-racism and race equity. It leads on from the [Home Truths report](#)<sup>1</sup> published in 2020.

Our central tenets at Home Truths are that racism is:

- real and causes significant harm;
- carried in institutional policies, practices and norms;
- a problem in civil (and wider) society.

We understand that racism erases people's humanity and their possibilities. It divides us from one another. But crucially, we also know that it is possible to end racism and to create a society where everyone can thrive.

It's not easy to make real and lasting progress on anti-racism and race equity. But positive change does happen. It is happening.

Civil society organisations can play a vital part in advancing anti-racism, race equity and broader justice.

## Race Equity Series

The content of the Companion Journal is drawn from a five-part thematic Race Equity Series run as part of Home Truths 2. Each part of the series covers an important area of practice to support civil society to solve its ongoing racism problem.

If this Companion Journal is your first encounter with Home Truths, please take a look at the resources for the Race Equity Series. You will find online recorded sessions with leading keynote speakers, written Q&As with anti-racist practitioners and a set of Companion Notes to guide practical action and stimulate new approaches.

This wealth of content can be found on the Home Truths 2, Race Equity Series website:

**<https://www.acevo.org.uk/home-truths-2/race-equity-series/>**

# Key terms

**Racism** is the ideologically based practice of classifying humans into a racial hierarchy. This informs, requires and justifies actions and inactions – e.g., by law makers, decision makers or individuals – that tend to harm Black and Minoritised Ethnic people and help white people.

**Institutional (or institutionalised) racism** refers to unjust policies, procedures and prevailing social rules that operate within institutional settings.

**Anti-racism** is the practice of identifying and ending racism by changing the values, structures and behaviours that enable it.

**Race equity** is the work of ending racial disparities and breaking the link between life outcomes and 'race' or ethnicity. Race equity requires that we treat people in an appropriate way – not necessarily in the same way.

**Black and Minoritised Ethnic** is the imperfect term we use to collectively name populations harmed by racism. Among populations negatively and distinctly affected by racism are individuals of African, Caribbean, East Asian, Arab and South Asian backgrounds, Jewish people, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people.

# About the Companion Journal

This is not a report.

This Companion Journal offers insights on vital topics that can advance anti-racism and race equity in civil society and beyond.

The Journal is designed to help if you want to develop your own practice on anti-racism and race equity as well as that of your organisation and those you work with.

The Journal offers some quiet space for you to reflect on each of the themes and how you might spark powerful action in your institutional settings.

## **An advisory notice**

Racism is complex. There is no simple fix. Approach this content reflectively and with ambition. This journal is intended to support life affirming, anti-racist action inside and across civil society organisations.

No one person can do this work alone. It is a collective effort. Find your team, share the load and grow the power to transform. There may be resistance to change so please stay safe and well.

# Using this journal

## **Creating space**

Journalling can help when reflecting on challenges and opportunities in your own personal practice and that of your organisation. It can create space and provide perspective on a problem and unblock action.

## **Your own path**

What you do with the Journal is up to you. We hope that you make use of it in ways that make sense to you and your context.

You can input directly into this Journal or in some other format somewhere else. You could draw or write or record reflections through voice notes or videos. You may benefit from discussing reflections with a trusted peer.

## **Let loose**

Life-affirming work needn't be heavy. Put guilt about what you haven't yet done or don't yet know to one side. Don't feel that you have to get things 'right.' Where possible, avoid tightness. Instead try to let loose, to learn, experiment and try new things.

We hope that your engagement with the material will help to lift the words off the page and into practice. And that you in turn will help to remake civil society so that it contributes fully to an anti-racist future. Over to you.

# Why we need to move beyond diversity

“...nothing can be changed until it is faced”. - James Baldwin

## Facing problems

To solve racism, we need to face up to it. But racism can get talked around in favour of more palatable ideas, such as an emphasis on increasing ethnic diversity in workplaces.

However, in the words of Home Truths 2 expert partner Lena Bheeroo, head of anti-racism and equity at Bond:

**“Diversity will ... only ever be a plaster on solving deeper issues if the root causes of challenges aren’t addressed.”**

Or, put another way, we need to fix what lies beneath the diversity deficit in the first place: namely civil society’s racism problem.

## The limits of diversity

More ethnically diverse organisations are considered by some to be more in tune with wider society and more effective compared to less diverse counterparts.

Diversity is often combined with two other approaches: There is equity, which refers to ending patterns of racial and other group-based disparities. And inclusion; a set of behaviours and practices that foster equity, e.g., positive action for some minoritised populations.

But even as a trio, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is largely about increasing Black and Minoritised Ethnic representation rather than ending racism. And our research shows that racist harms<sup>2</sup> persist even with an emphasis<sup>3</sup> on diversity and EDI.

Increasing employee ethnic diversity may change who does the organisation's work without changing what the organisation's work is. And this can leave in place civil society's failures to support<sup>4</sup> Black and Minoritised Ethnic populations at large.

### **Anti-racism and race equity**

Attending to underlying issues of racism requires a different approach – including anti-racism and race equity.

Anti-racism is the proactive practice of identifying and ending racism. It means changing organisational values, structures and behaviours. Race equity complements anti-racism as it focuses on securing good and equitable outcomes for all and ending racial disparities.

In practice, organisations that aim to deliver anti-racism and race equity do a number of different things.

They own their complicity in racism and acknowledge their shortcomings. They make sure to support and be guided by people inside the organisation who may experience racism. They also ensure that anti-racist and race equity efforts are an institution-wide responsibility.

In addition, they will institutionally root anti-racist and race equity endeavours, e.g., by tying them to the organisation's purpose. As a result, they will come to understand that ending racism and racial disparities are integral to true advances in health, education, economic security and so on. This makes anti-racism and race equity core work, not an optional extra.

### **Beyond words**

The language of anti-racism and race equity alone offers no guarantee of meaningful change. However, naming and facing the problem of racism means that when change comes, it is based on honesty and firm foundations.

# A SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How have you already progressed with your anti-racism efforts?**

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**What is your current big goal and how will you achieve it?**

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**What specifically are you going to do next with this big goal?**

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## Intersectionality: changing power relations

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides...” - **Kimberlé Crenshaw**

### **The oppressive use of power**

Intersectionality studies how power dynamics, shaped by institutional actions and the use of the law, create patterns of inequity across particular populations.

Kimberlé Crenshaw – a leading legal scholar – in her groundbreaking work on intersectionality drew on the case of a group of Black women employees. They worked at General Motors and sued the company, claiming they were blocked from promotion within the organisation. The defence argued that the organisation had previously promoted white women and Black men therefore could not be racist or misogynistic. The court dismissed the claim, because it did not recognise how racism and misogyny can combine to harm the women.

This case, and intersectionality more generally, shows that power is shaped by multiple overlapping ideologies including racism, classism and misogyny. These forces work against numerous populations, including those who are Black or Minoritised Ethnic, working class, people who are disabled, female, non-binary and so on. And some people face multiple interacting layers of harm.

To seriously address intersectionality, we must a) recognise how power impacts various groups; and b) strive to make power structures operate in pursuit of equity.

### **The wrong end of the telescope**

The potential of intersectionality to change how and in whose interest power works may not be realised, because intersectionality is sometimes

viewed from the wrong end of the telescope. From this perspective there is too much focus on *identity* and not enough on *politics*.

In other words, to serve anti-racism, race equity and efforts to ensure all people can thrive, it is important to go beyond comparing which groups do better and worse. Instead the emphasis should be on examining and altering the underlying power structures that drive harm and inequitable outcomes.

### **Making things political**

Intersectionality is inherently political. It is about how the use and distribution of power shapes equitable and inequitable outcomes. Mainstream civil society organisations guided by intersectionality therefore will be doing a number of things at the same time.

They work to understand how existing power dynamics shape their specific issues, such as poverty, health or climate crisis.

They develop strategies to address power imbalances and inequitable impacts, e.g., by undertaking strategic litigation to use the law to support those experiencing harms.

They understand that racism, classism, misogyny and so on are not the same – but that they are connected and harmful. They see that, ultimately, to stop any of these forces we must defeat them all.

### **Specific interventions**

Importantly, as organisations seek to take forward the insights from intersectionality, they should also have the confidence to intervene specifically for anti-racism and race equity where that is needed. Intersectionality is not about doing everything at once. It is about action within a larger context of power and harm.

# A SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**In your work in civil society, how are you seeing power maintaining inequity?**

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**What is needed to address these imbalances?**

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**What specifically are you going to do next?**

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# Mission driven race equity

“As institutions ... change, so do beliefs, values and practices”. - **Sally Engle Merry**

## **Finding staying power**

There are moments in time when racism and efforts to promote anti-racism attract significant attention and interest. These often follow moments of crisis, such as the murder of George Floyd in 2020. But attention is not the same as action and curiosity is not the same as commitment.

As the memory of specific events fades, agendas shift focus and history suggests that mainstream efforts for race equity lack staying power.

However, it can be different. For this to be so, anti-racism and race equity must become fundamental to mission and purpose for mainstream civil society organisations and much more institutionally embedded. That in turn will spell the end for sporadic, occasional, 'special' efforts and a move to everyday anti-racism.

## **Culture counts**

The shift needed is a cultural one – where culture encompasses beliefs, values and practices. Recognising the scale of the challenge is part of the work of securing transformation and, while cultural shifts do not come easy, they do happen through altering daily practices.

In the words of Home Truths 2 expert partner Mandeep Rupra, director of equity and culture at Citizens Advice:

**“It’s not just about the training you do, books you read, the data we collect, but how we put the learning into practice in our daily relationships, the conversations we have about race and racism, how we make decisions...”**

## **Signs of mission-driven race equity**

Everyday practices are critical but they don't come out of nowhere. They are fostered intentionally by institutions. And organisations on the path towards a culture of anti-racism may exhibit a number of tell-tale signs.

Their anti-racist work is based on long-term responses rather than short-term reactivity to one crisis or another.

These efforts for anti-racism and race equity are institutionalised rather than individualised. The workload is shared across people in the organisation. If key people leave the organisation, the work can continue with equal vigour.

Organisations working in this mission-centred way will engage in an ongoing, active process of self-examination. And where their anti-racist efforts are falling short, they will seek to understand why and adjust their approaches – rather than downgrade their ambitions.

## **From curiosity to commitment**

Mission-driven conditions and behaviours are within reach for mainstream civil society institutions. Ambition and steadfastness can ensure that organisations move in the direction of making central anti-racism and race equity. In doing so new sets of beliefs, values and practices take hold. Organisations move beyond curiosity to commitment and towards taking the cause to heart.

# A SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How can race equity be deeply embedded in your work/organisation?**

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**What is needed to achieve this depth?**

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**What specifically are you going to do next?**

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# Reporting & responding to ethnic pay disparities

“If we do not understand how systemic racism shows up at work then we cannot address it.”

– Zoe Kabir, Home Truths 2 expert partner

## Money matters

One way in which civil society's racism problem can manifest is in terms of unjust pay for Black and Minoritised Ethnic staff. The ethnicity pay gap measures the difference in the average pay between Black and Minoritised Ethnic staff compared to white British counterparts.

Measuring and publicly reporting ethnicity pay gap data can make it easier to see how Black and Minoritised Ethnic employees are situated in civil society organisations and create impetus for pay equity.

## Publishing data

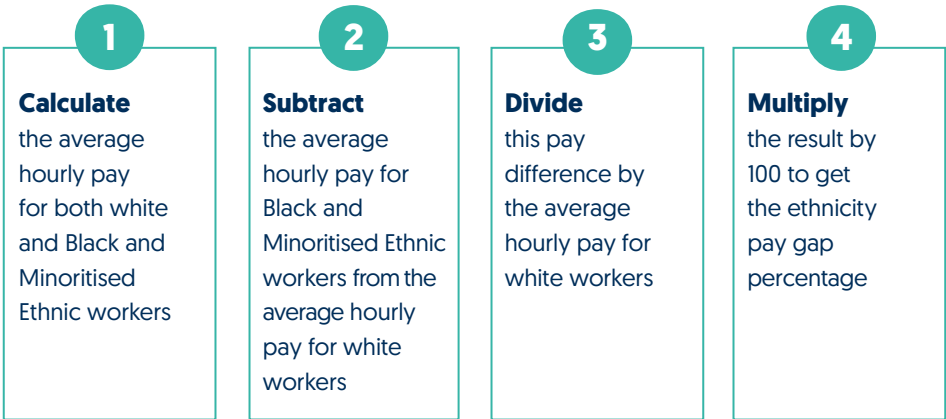
Civil society has been slow to publish annual ethnic pay gap data. In 2022, only 27 of the top 100 charities by income reported their figures.

The data published reveals an ethnic pay gap of 22 per cent – meaning that if the average white worker earned £25,000 a year, their average Black or Minoritised Ethnic counterpart would earn just £19,500.

Where possible, it is usually more helpful to calculate pay gaps in relation to white colleagues for specific Black or Minoritised Ethnic people as pay can vary<sup>5</sup> significantly.

## Ethnicity pay calculations

The ethnic pay gap can be calculated through the following four steps:



## Causes of pay disparities

Ethnicity pay gaps exist because Black and Minoritised Ethnic people are over-represented in relatively low-paid roles and occupations.

Most importantly, gaps are generated because of a variety of overlapping institutionalised and structural factors. These can be due to direct [racist recruitment](#)<sup>6</sup> and progression practices. There can also be more indirect reasons, e.g., family wealth, educational attainment and qualifications, previous work experience and nationality.

## Paying dues

While it is no magical solution, reporting ethnicity pay gaps can call attention to financial realities of being classified white or Black or Minoritised Ethnic in civil society.

And the ethnicity pay gap calculation – particularly seen in the light of additional factors such as gender and class – can help organisations to understand that to end racism we cannot take the world as we find it, we have to actively remake it.

# A SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How do ethnic pay disparities show up in organisations you work with?**

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**What is needed to end these disparities?**

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**What specifically are you going to do next?**

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## Reporting racism: facing uncomfortable truths

“When it comes to a conversation on racism, somehow you end up talking about something else.”

- Home Truths interviewee

### **The uncomfortable truth**

In civil society, we often insist that voice matters and that policymakers and decision makers must listen to ‘the people’. But what happens when colleagues raise concerns about racism inside a civil society organisation?

In too many cases the institution finds it hard to hear the uncomfortable truth. It can shake the belief in civil society that it is home to those who ‘do good’. It can make senior leaders realise that they have not been anti-racist but have contributed to racism.

### **The dynamics of denial**

Institutional commitment to anti-racism and race equity is nowhere under more strain than when faced with reports of racism. It can deeply disturb organisational serenity. This can result in severe forms of defensiveness – such as DARVO<sup>7</sup>.

DARVO stands for Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender. Organisations reacting to reports of racism may use this approach to push back on the existence of a problem, attacking the credibility or intentions of those who raise a concern about racism. This kind of approach causes additional damage beyond what occurred to prompt the initial report. It makes those who report racism<sup>8</sup> the problem – rather than racism itself.

## **Towards acceptance**

But just as there is denial there can be serious efforts towards acceptance. As Home Truths 2 expert partner Margaret Greer, National Officer, Race Equality UNISON Centre, explains:

**“Reporting racism is not just about exposing injustice – it’s about taking the first step towards meaningful change.”**

We know from our [survey](#)<sup>9</sup> work that one important change that people reporting concerns want is to be believed and taken seriously by institutions. They don't want simply to be asked to provide evidence of wrongdoing.

Institutions that want to act can do so. They can engage [outside agencies](#)<sup>10</sup> to investigate instances of racism and undertake broader assessments of institutional culture. They can create channels for anonymous reporting and reflections and they can help to set up supportive employee networks.

## **Organisations, racism and healing**

Systems and processes are critical to developing humane responses to reports of racism within organisations. But these systems will only be created and will only thrive within organisations willing to resist the temptation to deflect and instead hold themselves accountable in cases of racism.

This committed approach to reporting racism can help those impacted to heal. It can also contribute to organisational development towards truly supporting anti-racism and race equity.

# A SPACE FOR REFLECTION

**How considerate are organisations you work for/with to people who report racism?**

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**What is needed for organisations to listen when racism is reported?**

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**What specifically are you going to do next?**

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## Closing reflections

The themes in this Companion Journal provide different ways to positively intervene for anti-racism and race equity. Some elements are about overall positioning, such as why we need to move beyond diversity. Others are more practically orientated, e.g., addressing ethnic pay gaps.

The aspects are complementary and interlinked – and there is no need to do everything everywhere all at once.

When the first Home Truths report was launched in 2020, Covid-19 was revealing how racism can be a matter of life and death. The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 was another grim reminder of this reality. Though memory fades, the life-limiting impacts of racism remain.

But at the same time meaningful change happens. It is happening.

In our work we have met so many wonderful people. They are helping to make an anti-racist future in which all of us can thrive. In fact, they are doing what civil society does at its best; they are refusing to accept the world as it is. Instead, they are remaking it so that we can all live well, together.

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Finally, we dedicate this Journal to all those who have experienced racism in civil society and those who are working to end it. We hope that our efforts contribute to healing and transformation.

**The Home Truths 2 team**

"Don't be held back by the unknown, of striving for perfection on the first go. This is complex work, this is hard work, this is self work – meaning it will require self reflection, sitting in discomfort and building the muscle to do that and come back to it again and again."

**- Lena Bheeroo, head of anti-racism & equity at Bond**

Civil society has a vital role to play in advancing anti-racism, race equity and broader justice. This Companion Journal is part of the Home Truths 2 programme designed to support the sector to this end.

The Journal contains specialist content on key themes, words of encouragement and motivation. It provides prompts for reflection to help the reader to work in a personalised way with the ideas offered, to bring them to life and to make change happen.

**“To end racism we cannot take the world as we find it, we have to actively remake it.”**

**- Dr Sanjiv Lingayah**

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