As Presented at the
CTCORE-Organize Now!
Fall Racial Justice Conference
Whitneyville Cultural Commons, Hamden, CT
Saturday, October 21, 2017
CTCORE-Organize Now! - Racial Justice Platform

Mission

CTCORE-Organize Now! is dedicated to building communities of racial justice freedom fighters to dismantle systemic and structural racism in the state of Connecticut.

We achieve our mission through a three-pillared movement building strategy and combine local base building (through our chapters) with issue-focused statewide network building.

About Our Platform

In January 2017, CTCORE called a meeting for organizers, educators, artists, healers, and more – people of color from various corners of Connecticut. The purpose of this meeting was to begin a process to develop a statewide agenda or platform, centered on the shared experiences of Connecticut residents of color. This Platform would then be used to create and coordinate strategies for racial justice movement building, centering the leadership of Connecticut residents of color.

This Racial Justice Platform Network (RJPN) met monthly from January to June in Bridgeport, Hamden, New Haven, and Hartford. For 6 months, the RJPN focused on and discussed the values for which the Platform and subsequent racial justice/equity work must be rooted in. In July, we drafted our Racial Justice Platform Values Statement.

During the months of August and September, we organized four public, participatory forums – open to all Connecticut residents. The four forums were based on our four racial justice categories - Criminal Justice Reform, Education Equity, Economic Justice, and Environmental Justice/Health Equity. They were held in the four cities where CTCORE prioritized establishing local, resident-led chapters in 2017 – Waterbury, New Haven, Bridgeport, and Hartford.

At these forums, members, supporters, and those new to CTCORE were introduced to CTCORE’s story, mission and purpose, our racial justice pillars (Community Organizing, Training, and Community Building) and the three frames through which this platform would be organized – Reparations, Current Systemic Inequity, Building New Systems and Institutions. Participants of these forums would help us identify and explore issues related to our four racial justice categories through the frames mentioned above (e.g. issues related to Criminal Justice Reform that call for reparations, equity in a current context, and/or community-driven alternatives).

Our Racial Justice Platform Network reconvened to study the information gathered during the Summer Forums. They analyzed and prioritized the issues and solutions put forth through the lens of our values statement. The result of the 9-month effort is the following CTCORE Racial Justice Platform.
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Values Statement

We affirm and we have a right to affirm our humanity and the necessity of our liberation. We have a right to environments that likewise affirm our humanity and our liberation. We have a right to define both.

Racism, white supremacy, and antiBlackness are polluting our environments. These pollutants have been weaponized to oppress and exploit Black people and other people of color in the U.S. for centuries, to decimate our communities, and to stymie any real opportunities for full equity and equality. This weaponization began when the first slave ships stole Africans from the Gold Coast and when the first European colonizers stole land from and attempted genocide against the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Through these actions, our ancestors’ freedoms were stolen and, simultaneously, their struggle for liberation began.

Despite the efforts of our ancestors, racism, white supremacy, and antiBlackness continue to oppress, evolve, and embed themselves within the fabric of American society. We can see the legacy of these forces in mass incarceration and police brutality, the school-to-prison pipeline and lack of resources for schools, generational poverty and discriminatory housing policies, and the high mortality rate that results from preventable diseases and insufficient health care, among other places. By challenging racism’s hold, we seek to realize our ancestors’ dream of liberation and to reclaim their freedom as well as our own.

In order to attain freedom, we must heal our communities and prevent further harm. Our aim in organizing is to repair ourselves and our communities and to secure future generations from racist violence of all kinds. We have a right to define what our liberation looks like and to fight for it until we deem that it has been realized. We assert that reparations are necessary compensation for the physical and psychological exploitation that Black people and other people of color have faced, as well as compensation for being shut out of opportunities for prosperity that are predicated on that exploitation. These reparations must be paid in full in order for our future liberation and the liberation of this nation to be possible.

CTCORE--Organize Now! is committed to eliminating all systemic racial inequities in Connecticut. We use four racial justice categories--criminal justice reform, education equity, economic justice, and environmental justice/health equity--as a framework for identifying policy reforms for addressing racial disparities. We demand that all public officials adopt our platform and invite all justice-minded Connecticut residents to join us in realizing this vision.
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REAL (Reparations, Equity, and Liberation)

Organizing Frames

- **Reparations** – We recognize that identifying measures to heal from the harms of structural racism is an essential component of racial justice work. We also recognize that reparations are necessary for addressing past, present, and all harm that may occur before this work is complete.

- **Equity (Addressing Current Systemic Inequity)** – We recognize that all of our systems are rooted in oppression, inequity and injustice. They are designed to harm Black people, other people of color and other marginalized communities. Harm reduction is often confused with liberation work. Our work dealing with current systemic inequity is about mitigating and ceasing that harm. Systems and intuitions which are rooted in the oppression of our people, do not have the capacity to support our liberation.

- **Liberation (Building New Systems and Institutions)** – We recognize that the systems and institutions capable of affirming and embracing our humanity and liberation must be envisioned and built by us. We are identifying and putting in place the conditions to make the construction of just systems and institutions possible.

***** We acknowledge that it is necessary to organize through all three of these frames, simultaneously, in order to finally liberate us all from the long and pervasive legacy of racism and white supremacy. *****
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Racial Justice Pillars

Community Organizing

Training

Community Building

Building New (Just) Systems & Institutions

Current Systemic Inequity

Organizing Frames

Reparations

Structural Racism & White Supremacy

Mobilization
Policy Reform
Direct Action
Issue Campaigns

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Priorities

Criminal Justice Reform -- The War on Drugs has resulted in unjust criminalization, policing, and incarceration in communities of color.

Reparations--
1. Automatic restoration of voting rights for the formerly incarcerated
2. Elimination of debt related to incarceration
3. Restitution for those unjustly incarcerated
4. Exoneration of criminal records
5. Access to housing subsidies

Current Systemic Inequity--
1. Police oversight
2. Bail reform
3. End the school-to-prison-pipeline
4. Ban the box

New Systems and Institutions--
1. Prison abolition
2. Alternatives to policing
Priorities

**Education Equity** -- The current educational system has been responsible for cultural and educational erasure, dehumanization, and eradication of Black and Brown communities and has acted as a direct pipeline to the criminal justice system.

**Reparations**--
1. Defense and improvement of affirmative action policies (for access to higher education)
2. Free, quality education for all
3. Public resources for non-traditional, justice-oriented educational programming hosted by community groups and organizations

**Current Systemic Inequity**--
1. Equitable school funding
2. Non-oppressive and inclusive curriculum that prepare all students to dismantle systems of oppression
3. Eliminate standardized tests
4. Mandatory anti-racism training for teachers, faculty, and staff
5. Increase access and incentivize teaching opportunities for educators of color
6. Free higher education for all

**New Systems and Institutions**--
1. Creation and maintenance of holistic freedom schools that are rooted in community-oriented, culturally-relevant values and priorities
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Priorities

**Environmental Justice and Health Equity**— Black people and other people of color have regularly been subjected to non consensual experimentation on their bodies and communities as a result of racist policy and practice.

**Reparations**—
1. Remediation of toxins from our environments
2. Breaking down barriers to land ownership for Black people and other people of color
3. Access to free psychological and emotional wellness services to address the traumas associated with structural racism
4. Public acknowledgement of racist experimentation on the bodies of Black people and people of color as well as restitution for these individuals and their families

**Current Systemic Inequity**—
1. Ending environmental racism such as pollution of the air, the water, our homes and or infrastructure, as well as the land.
2. Access to quality, single-payer healthcare for all

**New Systems and Institutions**—
1. Community-run food systems
2. Cooperatively-owned green utilities
3. Community care network (alternative to state interventions around health and public safety)

Priorities

Economic Justice-- The United States’s enormous wealth has been amassed through the denial of our humanity and the forced exploitation of our land and labor.

Reparations--
1. Breaking down barriers to homeownership for Black people and other people of color
2. Forgiveness of debt (i.e. student debt, predatory loans, etc.)
3. Restitution for generations of economic oppression and exploitation

Current Systemic Inequity--
1. Free training in financial literacy and investment
2. Establishment of a living wage for all
3. Free higher education for all

New Systems and Institutions--
1. Free housing for all
2. Racial justice credit union or some other cooperatively-owned, just financial institution
3. Establishment of alternative systems to capitalism