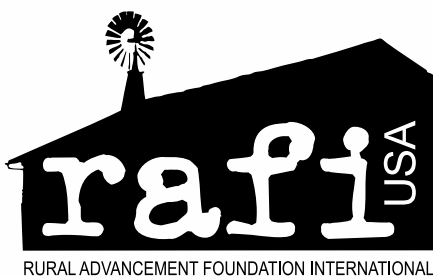
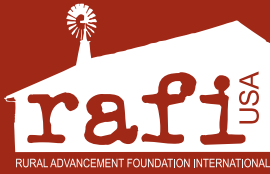




WHEN DIVERSITY ISN'T ENOUGH

Experiences of Board Members of Color at
Agricultural and Environmental Nonprofits





This report was developed by the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, a nonprofit organization that cultivates markets, policies, and communities that support thriving, socially just, and environmentally sound farms.

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We especially thank all those who graciously shared their experiences with us for this publication. We are grateful for your courage, candor, and service to bringing more justice into your work.

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ABOUT RAFI-USA

The Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA) believes that in order to ensure a safe, adequate supply of healthy food, we must protect farm workers and encourage environmentally sound farming. We see environmental sustainability, economic viability, biodiversity, and social justice as inextricably linked. Therefore, the best way to ensure a just, sustainable future for farming is to create a reality where farmers feel supported and protected, and have the resources to thrive.

RAFI-USA's mission is to cultivate markets, policies, and communities that support thriving, socially just, and environmentally sound family farms.

RAFI-USA'S VISION:

Family farmers have the power to earn a fair and dependable income.

Everyone who labors in agriculture is respected, protected, and valued by society.

Air, water, and soil are preserved for future generations. The land yields healthy and abundant food and fiber that is accessible to all members of society.

The full diversity of seeds and breeds, the building blocks of agriculture, is reinvigorated and publicly protected.

RAFI-USA's programs address the trends and changes in agriculture that affect us from the local to the global levels.

We combine on-the-ground services with national and international policy advocacy to ensure farmers have access to the tools they need to make the right choices for their farm and families. In turn, we want to ensure the best choice for farmers is also the best choice for their communities and the environment.

We are collaborative, achieving results through coalitions, partnerships, and affiliations. Working with a variety of farm, community, university, and government groups, we promote sustainability, equity, and diversity in agriculture through policy changes, practical assistance, market opportunities, and access to financial and technical resources.

To find out more about RAFI-USA, visit www.rafiusa.org.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As a justice organization that works on agricultural issues, RAFI-USA acknowledges that the lack of board diversity¹ is a considerable challenge within the nonprofit world. This challenge is particularly striking within environmental and agricultural organizations compared to other nonprofit counterparts.

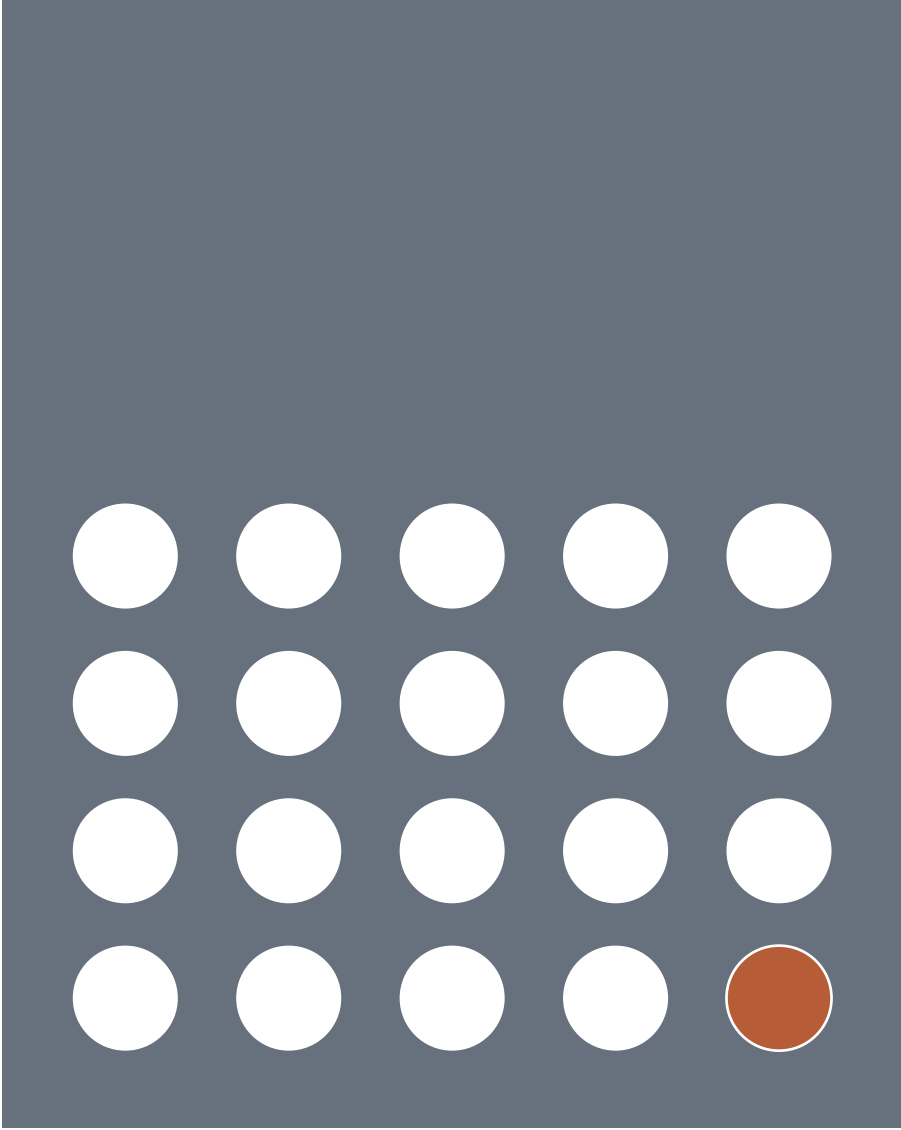
In 2015, RAFI-USA began a series of projects, funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, with the goal of increasing the representation of farmers of color¹ on Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Soil and Water Conservation District committees, which make many decisions about funding for local farmers. Ultimately, as we recruited farmers of color for these roles and worked with them more, it became clear that our project goals would need to change. Most of the farmers had no interest in joining a county committee. Many had bad individual or family experiences with FSA, or a generalized knowledge of how farmers of color had been treated by FSA historically, which made them unwilling to engage further. Some had already served on committees and said they felt it had not made a difference because they were only there as a token and were not listened to. We did not want to urge farmers to put themselves in environments that were harmful, and changed the focus of our work to exploring the topic of the environments within committees that make them uncomfortable or unsafe places for Black people, indigenous people, and people of color¹ to participate.

We broadened the scope of our work to include nonprofit boards in the agricultural or environmental sectors, organizations which also often make decisions about resource distribution, and which often have only one or no people of color on their boards. We knew that sitting on nonprofit boards could help people of color build leadership experience, but we were also hearing stories of board service not being a positive experience. We also saw a pattern in which some people of color, having become known in the sector, were suddenly recruited for many boards; while other highly qualified professional people of color had never been asked. We see this as a symptom of the networks of white-led agricultural and environmental nonprofits rarely extending beyond predominantly white spaces.

We decided to conduct interviews with board members of color, because it is not enough to recruit them and assume the work is done: it is also about what happens to people of color once they are in those spaces. These interviews examine the cost of “diversity” on the people of color sitting on nonprofit boards. Their pictures are displayed on websites as proof of “diverse” boards. **We must hear their stories as well.**

Edna Rodriguez
Executive Director
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA

¹ A full introduction to anti-racist analysis is not within the scope of this work; however, as a guide we offer a glossary of racial equity terms, including “diversity,” “farmers of color,” and “people of color” in the resources section at the end of this report.



5%

**OF ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
SURVEYED HAD PEOPLE OF COLOR
ON THEIR BOARDS.⁷**



CONTEXT

In its biennial signature study of nonprofits, leading nonprofit consultant group BoardSource² released *Leading With Intent: 2017 National Index of Board Practices*. This document reports on “current board composition, practices, and performance and charts important trends and changes in board leadership.” According to BoardSource, “the study also laid bare some disturbing truths: that we have made little progress when it comes to building more racially diverse boards.”³ More than a quarter of the organizations that participated in the study reported that they did not have a single person of color currently serving on their board of directors. Among the key findings, this disturbing trend was the first to be noted:

Boards are no more diverse than they were two years ago and current recruitment priorities indicate this is unlikely to change. Despite reporting high levels of dissatisfaction with current board demographics — particularly racial and ethnic diversity — boards are not prioritizing demographics in their recruitment practices.

BoardSource is not alone in recognizing this issue. In 2018, Nonprofit Quarterly convened a panel of experts to explore why inclusion⁴ is an ongoing struggle. Chris Fredette of the University of Windsor acknowledges that to truly diversify, we must redistribute power – a process that takes time but also works in direct opposition to larger economic forces that impact the nonprofit sector.⁵ Lack of progress in diversification can also be a symptom of discomfort with the subject or lack of accountability to change the status quo.⁶

Adequate representation has proven to be a particular challenge in the environmental sector. In 2014, Green 2.0, an initiative for equity and inclusion in the green movement, released a comprehensive report which revealed that only 5 percent of environmental organizations surveyed had people of color on their boards.⁷ This five percent puts environmental organizations alarmingly behind the nonprofit sector as a whole (73 percent).⁸ In combination with our own work and the findings of BoardSource and Green 2.0, RAFI-USA decided to conduct further research into the dynamics of diversity within environmental and agricultural board service.

THE IMPORTANCE AND DANGERS OF RECRUITING DIVERSE LEADERSHIP

Organizations have different reasons for prioritizing diversity on their boards, but social science is mixed on the benefits. At its core, increased diversity of any kind promotes creative thinking and innovation.⁹ In some cases, diversity of occupation on nonprofit boards was associated with more legitimacy with the public and higher fundraising results.¹⁰ Strategically, board diversity can help ensure an organization’s activities stay relevant to the needs of an ever-evolving constituency.¹¹ However, racial diversity has not been shown to have a significant association with nonprofit performance.¹²

Done improperly, efforts to diversify leadership can have harmful effects. The most obvious of these is tokenism, whereby one person of color is given the “token” of board membership while the substantive components

2 BoardSource is the recognized leader in nonprofit board leadership and supports, trains, and educates nonprofit leaders from across the country and throughout the world – www.boardsource.org

3 <https://boardsource.org/research-critical-issues/nonprofit-sector-research/>

4 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

5 <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/why-are-we-still-struggling-with-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-nonprofit-governance/>

6 <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/why-are-we-still-struggling-with-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-in-nonprofit-governance/>

7 The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies – <https://www.diversegreen.org>

8 <https://leadingwithintent.org/>

9 Michel, J. G., & Hambrick, D. C. (1992). Diversification posture and top management team characteristics. *Academy of Management Journal*, 35, 9-37.

10 Siciliano, J. I. (1996). The relationship of board member diversity to organizational performance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 15, 313-132.

11 Brown, William A. “Inclusive Governance Practices in Nonprofit Organizations and Implications for Practice.” *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 12(4), (Summer 2002): 369-85.

12 Kochan, T., Bezrukova, K., Ely, R., Jackson, S., Joshi, A., Jehn, K., Leonard, J., Levin, D. and Thomas, D. (2003). The effects of diversity on business performance: Report of the diversity research network. *Human Resource Management* 42(1), 3-21.

of decision-making, influence, and authority are withheld.¹³ While much of the research on tokenism focuses on how it affects organizations, significantly fewer formal studies center on tokenism's effects on the individual. As the lone representative of an underrepresented group, individuals can fear losing their position if they believe they only have it because of their race. This can lead to them not speaking up to avoid potential embarrassment.¹⁴ Conversely, that fear can compel minorities to demonstrate they 'deserve' to be part of the team. One survey found tokenized individuals faced problems with job satisfaction, feeling overworked, and being pigeonholed as a de facto diversity officer for the organization based on their racial identity.¹⁵ Morgan Parker, a self-identified Black female poet, identifies depersonalization and questioning one's self-worth as "side effects" of tokenism.¹⁶ These psychological outcomes for people of color are symptoms of institutions with roots in white supremacy.¹⁷

Unfortunately, formal study on these individual effects is lacking. One major exception to this comes from BoardSource. In *Vital Voices: Lessons Learned from Board Members of Color*, authors Vernetta Walker and Deborah Davidson surveyed members of color about their experience on nonprofit boards, investigating both positive and negative aspects.¹⁸ The study focused on how people of color felt they were perceived and what they saw that needed to change to foster an attitude of inclusion.

13 "Prejudice" By Brad J. Hall, Assistant Professor from the University of New Mexico, "Leading from Within: Transforming Identity in Organizational Life", As presented for Leadership at 20, Porter and Green, the Academy of Leadership, University of Maryland, College Park National Center for Non-profit Boards question archive.

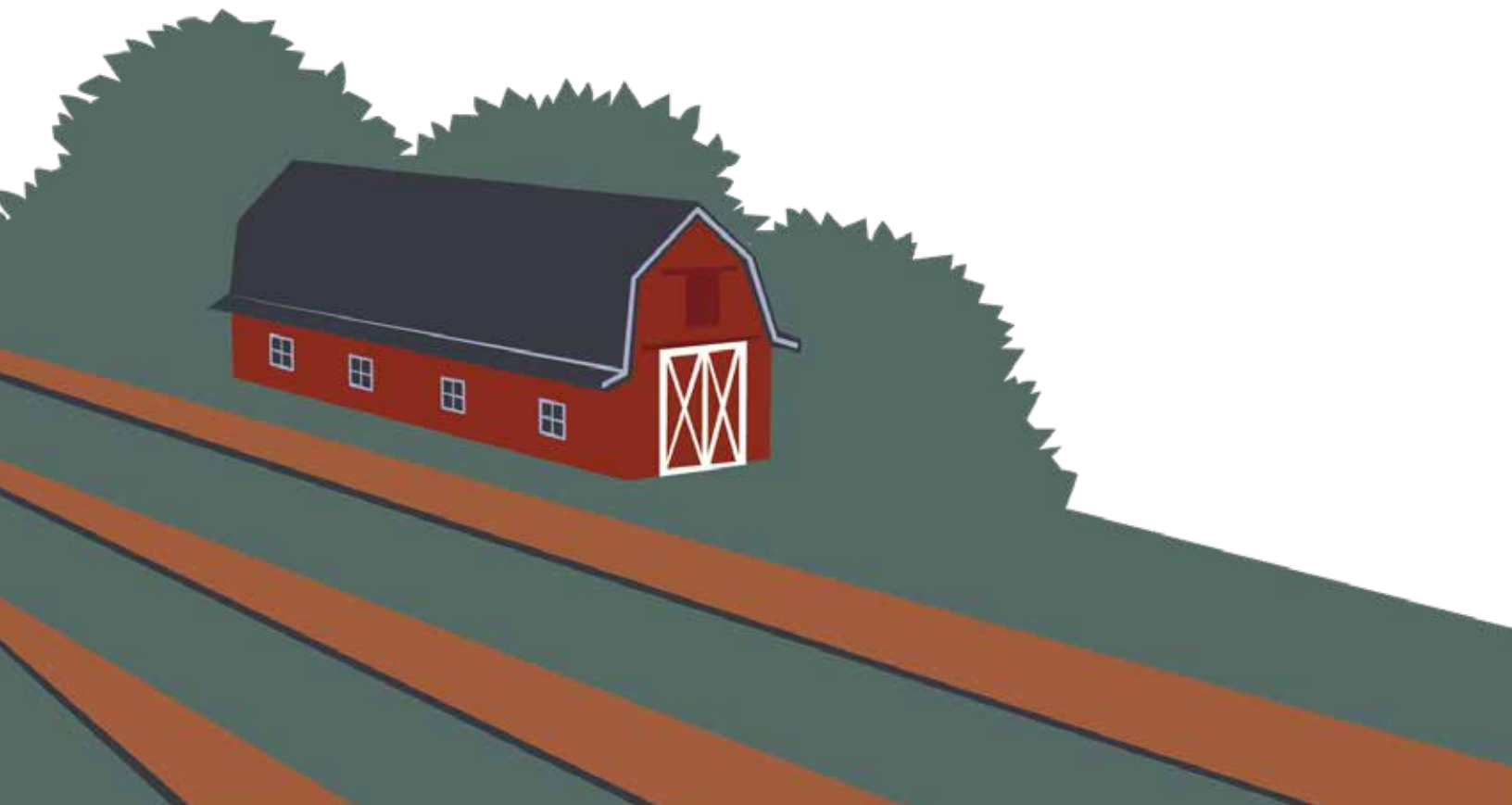
14 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2019/09/15/the-dangers-of-mistaking-diversity-for-inclusion-in-the-workplace/#345cdf84d86>

15 <http://www.resourcesharingproject.org/effects-tokenism-women-color>

16 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2015/12/tokenism-may-cause-the-following-side-effects>

17 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

18 <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/boardsource.pdf>



WHAT DOES THIS REPORT ADD?

While *Leading with Intent* provided the necessary quantitative data on this widespread inequity, *Vital Voices* revealed the qualitative side of institutional bias. BoardSource's dismal premonition that diversity on nonprofits boards was not likely to change prompted RAFI-USA to further inquire about the current state of board diversity within organizations similar to our own.

Our experience has shown that the environmental and agricultural spheres have a dark history when it comes to inclusion. Historical sites of conservation, like national parks, were established by displacing indigenous communities and people of color.¹⁹ By contrast, sites of environmental pollution and degradation have been found to disproportionately affect communities of color.²⁰ Slavery-enabled agriculture was foundational to making the United States a global economic power.²¹ Slave-grown southern cotton gave wealth to mills, manufacturers, and bankers in the north and expanded the economy nationwide. Modern industrial agriculture reflects the racist system upon which it was built, both in terms of ownership of land and capital, and in its current dependence on low-wage migrant labor. From 1910 to 2007, 80 percent of Black-owned land left Black communities.²² In an industry that relies on federal subsidies and relief, Black farmers have had unequal access to government resources to help them survive.²³

Like *Vital Voices*, this report aims to have conversations with people of color about their experience on boards with predominantly white members. Our goal is to use individual experiences in the agricultural and environmental sectors to illustrate the pressures put on people of color in board positions. By focusing on qualitative data, we hope to bring to light ways to promote a culture of equity and inclusion in sectors shaped by structural racism.²⁴

Multiple audiences can benefit from this report, including nonprofit leaders, diversity and inclusion professionals, nonprofit and philanthropy advisors, and executive search firms.

19 Bonta, M., DeFalco, T., & Taylor Smith, C. (2015). Diversity and the Conservation Movement. National Audubon Society – <https://theavarnagroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Conservation-and-Diversity.pdf>

20 Bullard, Robert D. (1996). Environmental Justice: It's More Than Waste Facility Siting. *Social Science Quarterly*, 77(3). 493-499 – <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42863495>

21 <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/06/slavery-made-america/373288/>

22 Shakara S. Tyler and Eddie A. Moore, "Plight of Black Farmers in the Context of USDA Farm Loan Programs," *Professional Agricultural Workers Journal* 1 (1) (2013): 6–11. –<https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/236726/files/Shakara%20S.%20Tyler.pdf>; Pamela Browning and others, "The Decline of Black Farming in America" (Washington: Commission on Civil Rights, 1982) –<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED222604.pdf>

23 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/reports/2019/04/03/467892/progressive-governance-can-turn-tide-black-farmers/>

24 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This project included interviews with people of color who are currently serving or have recently served on boards of directors for an environmental and/or agricultural nonprofit.

Interviewees were chosen through snowball sampling. Initially, we talked with a few known board members of color from our community and asked if they knew of anyone who should be invited to participate in the project. With our initial interviews and during a meeting for our Farmers of Color Network, we continued to extend invitations.

Interviewees were located across the United States, all serving or having recently served on a board. The organizations they served covered a wide geographic scope, ranging from local to regional levels. We focused on interviewees who had served in the environmental and food space, broadly defined as conservation, agriculture, and food and environmental justice organizations.

Interviewees were asked a series of questions ranging from how they were recruited to their overall board service experience. These questions were intentionally open-ended in order to open up interviewees to share their personal stories related to board service and culture. Below are the questions posed to each interviewee:

1. *How did you first learn about the organization?*
2. *How did you first hear of an opening on this board? How were you approached?*
3. *Why did you join the board? What motivated you?*
4. *How long have you served on the board? Do you expect to complete your term, and would you serve an additional term?*

5. *What's the reason you stay on the board?*
6. *What's the best part of this work for you?*
7. *What's the hardest part of this work?*
8. *As a board member, what are your thoughts on board diversity?*
9. *Do you think your race²⁵ and/or ethnic background influence(d) your experience in board work?*
10. *Do you think being on this board is/was a benefit to communities of color? Do you feel compelled to represent people of color?*
11. *What do you see as your role in your board service?*
12. *What have you learned from your time and service?*
13. *If there were a person of color interested in serving on this board, what would be your counsel to them?*

Our project interviewed a total of 11 men and women of color serving or who had recently served on environmental and/or agricultural-related boards. Of the 11 interviewees, African American, Latinx and Asian ethnic and racial groups were represented. The interviewees self-identified as persons of color and throughout the course of the interviews usually named their ethnic/racial affiliation.

Interviewees received a \$50 honorarium for their participation.

The same interviewer – a consultant for RAFI-USA and a self-identified African American, Puerto Rican and Malaysian woman – conducted all 11 interviews.

25 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.



EIGHT OF THE ELEVEN PERSONS INTERVIEWED FELT, IN THE INVITATION PROCESS, THAT THEY WERE INVITED MORE FOR THEIR RACIAL AND/OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND THAN THE SKILL SETS THEY COULD BRING TO THE BOARD.

RESULTS

Each question garnered varied responses among the 11 participants. The summaries offered in this report are in no way exhaustive of their related narratives. **We also recognize and acknowledge that choosing only certain portions of their experiences to be relayed for the purposes of this research can reduce their stories to subjective highlights.** We encourage those reading this report to understand that these interviews were far more expansive and nuanced than can be fully expressed here.

QUESTION 1: HOW DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION?

A majority of the interviewees had prior knowledge of and/or interaction with the organization before they were actively recruited to serve on the board. Their contact with an organization ranged from: (a) an established relationship with a staff or board member, (b) as a recipient of the organization's provided services, or (c) as an attendee at sponsored events and meetings. Conferences and events proved influential in acquainting the interviewees of color with the individual organizations. As one interviewee stated:

"I had some exposure to [the organization] in the past. They run a fairly large conference and I had been to the conference before a couple of times; really enjoyed the experience and more importantly, had really enjoyed the representation that was actually at the conference."

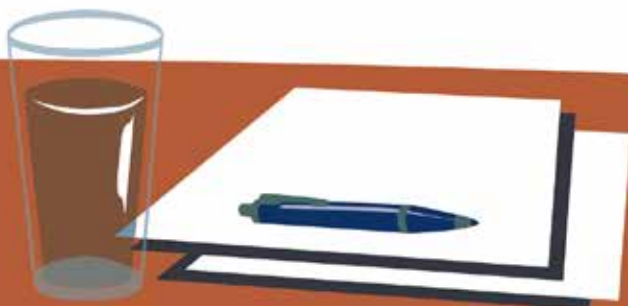
QUESTION 2: HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR OF AN OPENING ON THIS BOARD?

The vast majority of interviewees indicated that they learned of board openings through a personal invitation from either the executive director or a board member. Six of the eleven interviewees said they were approached by the executive directors and not board members.

Some indicated they were invited by close personal friends or through work connections. A few remarked they had absolutely no familiarity with the person who extended the invitation. One person heard of a board opening through a general newsletter.

According to the interviews, how and when an invitation was extended mattered. Eight of the eleven persons interviewed felt, in the invitation process, that they were invited more for their racial and/or ethnic background than the skill sets they could bring to the board. As one participant relayed:

"I was asked by the executive director. So, the first year they wanted me on, I didn't do it. And I didn't do it for that reason, because I know they were trying to get a person of color on their board and I kind of didn't want to be the token. So I was like 'I'm not doing that,' and that was my reason. I'm being very transparent; that was my reason for not doing it. Then they tapped me the next year, and I felt I was a little bit better able to do it the second year because of where I was in my own personal life and work life. So, I did it. Do I still think I'm a token? Yes."



QUESTIONS 3: WHY DID YOU JOIN THE BOARD? WHAT MOTIVATED YOU?

Two major motivators were named for why interviewees decided to serve as board members. The first motivator can be described as a sense of responsibility or duty to serve as a way to represent an underrepresented group of people. Overwhelmingly, race was stated as the particular underrepresented group, while others also named an age demographic and/or a geographic region. As one person remarked:

"So, some of it's personal strategy of just learning, the other part of realizing how can I further Black empowerment²⁶, Black culture, and make space for other folks, too, by being on these boards, at least for an amount of time."

The second key motivator from this question was a desire to participate on the board in order to gain knowledge, skills, and/or resources that would serve their personal and/or professional goals. Responses specifically mentioned leveraging relationships, understanding decision-making systems, and supporting work that paralleled their own career goals. One participant further elaborated:

"I wanted to see what kind of decisions were being made, who's making them, and the decision-making process. And that's pretty much the truth for all of them (the boards); to understand better how some of these systems work that have to do with things that affect everybody."

Respondents viewed serving on a board as an opportunity to represent and to speak on behalf of issues they saw as important both in their own lives and/or in the lives of people they represent, as spoken of in more detail by another participant:

"I felt that it was important here to the representation that I did policy and advocacy work as well as supported farmers. That was unique to the other folks on the board. I work in [City] and my region is in the Northeast. I just felt like that was needed – not just me as a person of color, but also the constituencies in the region that I represent or support – or my partners."

26 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

QUESTION 4: HOW LONG HAVE YOU SERVED ON THE BOARD? DO YOU EXPECT TO COMPLETE YOUR TERM, AND WOULD YOU SERVE AN ADDITIONAL TERM?

Interviewees had served on their boards from six months to nine years. Some served in different positions on the board during their time or took a break from their service and later returned.

More than half of the interviewees were serving on multiple boards at the time of the interview. A few of those not currently serving on two or more boards shared that they had simultaneously served on multiple boards in the past.

All the participants, save one, said they planned to complete their two- to three-year board service terms. A majority had plans to serve for a subsequent term, though some were more hesitant than others. One board member expressed how her longtime board service was affecting her decision about whether or not she should continue her further service:

"I'm a completion person, so I don't ever leave anything unless it's some type of emergency within my family or something like that, or my business. (Yet) I'm kind of getting burned out..."

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Those not seeking another term or having a hard time completing their current term cited problems of the organization as a cause of their reluctance:

"I decided that the approach that they had to creating community excluded people of color, and I wasn't satisfied with that. I spoke about it – that some of the programming and community efforts excluded people of color, and did not seem to be a good fit for me anymore."

QUESTION 5: WHAT'S THE REASON YOU STAY ON THE BOARD?

Overwhelmingly, interviewees stay on their boards due to a sense of responsibility to their individual communities. Some wanted to be involved in decision-making change. Others said they wanted to be connected with an organization that could support their own professional work and mission. Two interviewees mentioned that they stay involved to actively ensure that the board remains accountable to its stated mission and goals:

"I think there's a lot of identities that I may bring to that space that I think are important to be there. I think it's important for brown people to be on this particular board. I am recognizing my own [power] to be a megaphone for the folks that I know are not represented in that space, and I want to keep being that megaphone."

QUESTION 6: WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF THE WORK FOR YOU?

Largely, respondents loved how much they have been able to learn through their participation on the boards. Interviewees mentioned that they enjoyed learning about board governance and about the issues and programs within the organization.

Ten of the participants remarked how they were personally able to create change both internal and external to the organization, and that that was some of the best part of their service. As one board member shared:

"I love to learn. And so being able to see how things really work, and then be able to mess with that system after knowing how it works, is super exciting. Seeing where there are places to basically explode things, or blow them up, or change them in a way that seems like a small change but really becomes something much bigger."



Friendships and relationships, in general, proved a positive part of board service for many of the interviewees.

"I think the best part of it was the very – I won't say intimate, but – very close knowledge of the relationships with the people that you work with on the board: everybody's personalities come out, [laughs] you know, and the heat and the passion of discussion about issues that people care about. So you get to know people very well and I was impressed with the quality of the people that I was working with and their commitments and intelligence, and their sincerity."

QUESTION 7: WHAT'S THE HARDEST PART OF THE WORK?

The board members interviewed all had their own unique personal experiences of hardship with important nuances and variation, which should not be summarized as being a single experience of hardship. We offer their own words below rather than summarizing in an effort for their stories to be seen more fully.

We do note that a majority of the participants remarked that the hardest part of their service was tied to their experience as a person of color.

It is important that we highlight how often the normalization of white institutional culture is regarded



as the standard for all behavior and communication, regardless of one's race and ethnicity. The standards of what is considered normal and the privileges that are tied to them often go unrecognized by white people because they are most often unacknowledged and unconscious. We must keep in mind that most of our institutional culture was developed during times when white supremacy was the law of the land. When these historical cultural legacies are not recognized, the environments they create for people of color are often experienced as uncomfortable and increasingly toxic. Culture that is invisible is virulent. Characteristics of how white cultural norms and its privileges show up in your current board culture should be an intentional diagnostic undertaken as a part of any board diversity process.²⁷

Below are some of the sentiments expressed regarding the difficulty of board service, specifically as a person of color:

"Occupying space, giving time and resources, and not being heard. And I think that that certainly describes a token."

"Sometimes it's continuing to be the only voice of color in these places, and that gets old and tiresome."

"I think [the hardest part is] feeling that my personal and professional experience is as important and needed at that table [as] other people. I think sometimes in particular for women and in particular for folks of color, we're not given opportunities to be leaders or access power, [and] ways that people say or try to reason it out is [that] they minimize our actual lens or professional experience. It's something that I feel like even though I know that, I still struggle with it – not feeling inferior."

"It's hard to put yourself out there personally and professionally because you know we're historically taught that our work is minimized and our lived experience is not as important or real..."

"That is a hard part for me, because at the same time that I want white people to educate themselves, and to be woke, to use the trending term – when I see it not happening the way it should, I also have to speak up. I have to call people – not call people out, but say, "Hey, this is not how we go about it." So that's a challenge, because I'm also a human, I'm a person that has always been aware, since I was very young, of my Blackness, of my otherness, and always had to carry that for white people. So, to now do that in a historically white realm with majority white people, I feel like some PTSD is activated for me."

"I think the fundraising piece is the hardest part because we ask every board member to contribute. We also have 100 percent contribution and we also ask folks to fundraise and that for me is a challenge, the most challenging part because it's just... my people don't have a lot of spare cash to throw at things so... it's very difficult for me to just fundraise. I am usually the board member who sort of brings in the least."

"I think the hardest part for me is figuring out how to turn these kind of abstract ideas I have about equity and justice and being able to transform those into actions that are realistic."

²⁷ Tema Okun explores both characteristics of white cultural norms and antidotes to them in her article "White Supremacy Culture." See more in the Resources section of this report.

"I feel like they should be getting as much out of us as possible. I don't like the notion of just sitting. And so, I just feel like we should be utilized a little bit more."

"It's a lot of time commitment. And remembering which hat you have on where, because, I mean, with being on four boards, there's like a meeting all the time. But also, sort of navigating all the personal, social, and cultural things that you have to deal with everywhere. There's no time to let down your guard."

QUESTION 8: AS A BOARD MEMBER, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON BOARD DIVERSITY?

All the respondents stated that they valued diversity on boards, and many respondents further clarified that diversity does not only apply to race and ethnicity but rather to diversity in thought, gender, sexual orientation, life experience, class, and relationship with the organization. Although many respondents named diversity as vitally important and challenging to boards, many also readily admitted that it should not be overlooked, as an interviewee states:

"I think organizations should be tasked with creating a diverse board, and certainly that means ethnically diverse. However, I believe that the voices of women and the LGBTQ community are often left out as well. I think that it should be the duty of organizations to make sure that their board represents the communities in which they are serving, and that equal opportunity is given for voices to be heard, for leadership to be afforded to anyone who is a part of a board in the organization. ...I further believe that organizations shouldn't even exist with the absence of diversity, and the absence of people of color, and people from the LGBTQ community. I believe that organizations do disservice to communities when they are not intentional about diversity."

QUESTION 9: DO YOU THINK YOUR RACE AND/OR ETHNIC BACKGROUND INFLUENCE(D) YOUR EXPERIENCE IN BOARD WORK?

All the interviewees felt that their race and/or ethnic background influenced their board experience. While the answers were unanimously in the affirmative, the

conclusions as to how race and/or ethnicity impacted their work were varied. Here are some of their responses as to how they thought their work was influenced as a person of color:

"I think it has to influence your experience in everything... We don't live or work in a vacuum, we can't separate ourselves from our identities and obviously we're seen in a certain light, and so yes, I think it does color, pun intended, everything that you do."

"I would say absolutely and yet it's also for me to hold that I can't be the model minority²⁸.... You know race is important and it has to be there. I can say absolutely, and at the same time I also have to hold that I am not a model minority... I'm not one Black person that represents everybody. And yet I know that at the same time I have to hold space and lift up things that are important for multiple people."

"So, when we're going through different sessions, and we're able to voice our opinions, with certain board members, it was basically ignored. Just because I said it, it was ignored."

"I'M NOT ONE BLACK PERSON THAT REPRESENTS EVERYBODY. AND YET I KNOW THAT AT THE SAME TIME I HAVE TO HOLD SPACE AND LIFT UP THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR MULTIPLE PEOPLE."

²⁸ For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

QUESTION 10: DO YOU THINK YOU BEING ON THE BOARD WAS A BENEFIT TO COMMUNITIES OF COLOR? DO YOU FEEL COMPELLED TO REPRESENT PEOPLE OF COLOR?

Almost everyone felt their presence on the board was a benefit to their communities. In addition, almost everyone felt that they were compelled to represent people of color. Some considered the basic fact of having a person of color on the board as a win.

"I think that I do bring that knowledge base of the community, of that different aspect of the community life as well as different members of the community that would not be brought to light in any other way if I wasn't on board, and aspects of the community that I can speak to being a board member."

One respondent felt that their presence on the board was not beneficial.

"I think that my presence on a board is only beneficial to communities of color in any community when my true skills, abilities, and talents, and gifts can be utilized within that organization, and within the community. Just occupying a space on the board does no one any good. Matter of fact, I think it does damage when you're occupying the space, but you're not able to utilize your gifts because you exerted all your resources and your time and your energy, and then you're not even able to have your voice heard, or any of your ideas elevated."

Important to note is how another interviewee, a member of a board committed to issues of diversity and inclusivity, did not necessarily see their role as vital to these discussions:

"I'm the only Black male on the board but issues of racism – equity and inclusion – those things are always talked about, so I don't feel like I'm the one that has to be responsible to bring those things up. If I don't bring it up, it will definitely be brought up. That stuff's always in the circle of things to talk about."

QUESTION 11: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS YOUR ROLE IN YOUR BOARD SERVICE?

The answers to this question reflected the interviewees' commitment to their board service.

"DON'T LOSE YOURSELF IN IT, IN THE BOARD, AND DON'T BE INTIMIDATED. BUT STAND YOUR GROUND AND REPRESENT YOUR PEOPLE AS BEST YOU CAN, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT YOU ARE NOT SPEAKING FOR ALL, BUT ONLY SPEAKING FOR YOURSELF."

"I think my role as a board member is the same as everybody else's role, which is to make sure that the organization is healthy and moving in the right direction, so that's sorta my big picture role."

"I considered my main objective to bring order to the conversations, to bring respect and appreciation, and to create the space where every voice, no matter how disparate, would have a hearing and a fair hearing and to be considered on its merits."

In some cases, respondents felt additional responsibilities to communities of color.

"The main one is the opportunity for others, and in any person of color community that they can – because especially within my generation, I never saw any person of color on a board. And then the other is to be able to speak. So, again, my ideas may not be taken on, it may not be put into fruition, but I was able to voice it."



QUESTION 12: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR TIME AND SERVICE?

The responses to this question varied vastly. One commonality is that everyone felt that they had learned from their board service. However, responses were mixed as to whether that learning experience was positive.

Some learned how to better approach board service:

"[I learned] that I need to be very intentional about where I use my time and energy. Do research about the organization and the board members prior to agreeing to participate. Know that my agreement or service on that board will be mutually beneficial, that the organization will benefit from me, and that I will benefit from the organization by being able to speak, and be heard, and utilize my gifts and talents."

Others mentioned the need for taking care of themselves in the work.

"I think it's very easy to become over-boarded. And when you're over-boarded, I don't know that you can really do meaningful work. I am currently over-boarded, and I know that I can only give what I would consider A+ effort to two specific organizations."

Still others learned more about the racist systems within board service.

"And then, I feel like I've learned more about institutional racism²⁹, even just over the last two weeks, just dealing with this one board. I was like, okay, this is what this looks like."

"There's still a need and a push. So, if you're not asked to be on, there are probably certain boards that we should probably push to be on. And that needs to continue. And knowing and being comfortable that you're going to be going into spaces that – it's another level of white supremacy that you're going to probably experience. Some might feel similar and some might be different because you're pushing on different levels of power. And people are forced because of the structure to deal with you in a certain way or speak to you a certain way. And so, it doesn't mean that white supremacy goes away. It just means it shows up differently."

QUESTION 13: IF THERE WERE A PERSON OF COLOR INTERESTED IN SERVING ON THIS BOARD, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR COUNSEL TO THEM?

These responses varied from vetting the organization in question to affirmations of being persistent and strong in the work. Since this question was directed at people of color from people of color, we chose to let direct quotes populate this portion of the report.

"One, I would tell them that they should think about a private conversation with the executive director and board president prior to agreeing. Two, I would tell them that perhaps they should think about asking the organization to bring on two people of color at the same time. Three, in the spirit of diversity and inclusion and equity, I think that the current board members should all go through some racial equity training and conversations to get some kind of understanding and not just place a person of color on the board and claim that to be diverse."

"Stay steadfast, don't back down, and not to say they would even get resistance, but stay true to themselves. So, stay steadfast in your ideas, in your community's needs, and push through, regardless. Don't let anyone put out your light and try to shut you up."

29 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

“Just be true to your community, yourself, and just keep talking, keep talking, keep moving, keep doing the work, and no matter what resistance you may or may not receive, you’re doing this for so many other people.”

“Don’t lose yourself in it, in the board, and don’t be intimidated. But stand your ground and represent your people as best you can, knowing full well that you are not speaking for all, but only speaking for yourself.”

“Have a good support system because that stuff takes a lot of work out of people of color, a lot of emotional leg work.”

“I would tell them to be aware of – evaluate, and think about and be aware of – why they asked you to be on the board before you accept a seat on the board. Check out that organization and who the staff is and who the board is and the work that they’re doing and all that good stuff – their mission statement and everything – to make sure you’re joining something that isn’t using you but has your concerns and best interests at heart.”

ANALYSIS

This study aims to elevate the experiences of people of color on predominantly white organizational boards. The experiences were varied, but it is important to emphasize that the respondents were unanimous that race and/or ethnic background influenced their board service experience. Based on interview results, people of color felt unique burdens on nonprofit boards. These pressures fell into one of a handful of themes:

DISCOVERY OF LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Most of the interviewees had prior knowledge of the organizations where they served as board members, or had been personally invited to the board. These pre-existing relationships made it easier for people of color to be part of leadership because they did not have to find the opportunities themselves. By contrast, one of the interviewees highlighted that there are still more boards for which people of color have to push to be involved. Making these opportunities more widely known and creating strong relationships with communities of color lessens the burden on potential leaders of color to find options for involvement.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

As demonstrated in six of the thirteen questions, respondents felt uniquely responsible and accountable to communities of color. The compulsion to represent these communities was unanimous, but it came with the shadow of being overworked with such a responsibility. Interviewees felt that the communities they represented demanded a lot of them; while white people wanted them to represent a monolithic group. Many respondents also pointed out that they felt they were the only advocates for those communities or were made responsible for educating their fellow board members on issues of racial equity and justice. These additional responsibilities took their toll in the form of exhaustion, burn-out, and the need to preserve one’s energy. By contrast, when others on the board proactively engaged in discussions around equity, respondents were less burdened with carrying the torch.

INTEGRATION VS ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is generally defined as a process where “outsiders” adopt and become indistinguishable with the ways and norms of the dominant culture, whereas integration can be defined as individuals adding to the existing culture as equals. The difference is subtle but significant. Integration is not about losing identity but more about maintaining identity and adding to an existing culture in ways that transform it and enhance it. Respondents talked about the importance of staying true to yourself, and spoke to the challenge of maintaining their singular, unique identity in a role that was representative.

BEING HEARD AND VALUED

The final burden identified by respondents was the difficulty in being heard and valued for their full perspective. Despite being the lone advocates for racial equity on their boards, many interviewees repeatedly cited being unheard for their perspectives on not only racial equity issues but also other board issues. Additionally, respondents felt unsure of why they were targeted for board service in the first place, beyond being an advocate, because they were not being called upon for their skills. The problem of people of color being undervalued led to feelings of inferiority and less motivation to stay in service, perpetuating the cycle of homogeneity in the board setting. One respondent even warned future board members of color to consider their personal support system in order to carry on through their term of service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the burdens described in these interviews, we extrapolate several recommendations for cultivating authentic and positive board diversity. While these recommendations are consistent with our findings, we acknowledge that we are working from a small sample size. We encourage organizations seeking to promote inclusion to conduct their own assessments to determine what practices are best for them.

1. CULTURE IS CRUCIAL.

Vital Voices names board culture as the single largest influence on board experience. To lessen the potential burden on board members of color to enforce accountability, consider board culture and unwritten cultural norms around diversity and inclusion.³⁰ A code of conduct for board members and group agreements can help center an attitude of inclusion across leadership instead of assuming that people of color will bear that responsibility alone. Build a board culture in which board members can be intentional about taking care of themselves and giving others the space to do the same. Make sure that new board members receive onboarding and orientation that clarifies board culture as well as board roles so that new board members feel welcomed and understand their role, what is expected of them, and how they can best contribute. Have a transparent process for how board members are nominated or chosen for board leadership positions; make sure that all board members are given equal access to information on leadership positions within the board and are all invited to consider those roles.

2. RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY.

Strong relationships must be at the root of any work a board does within itself, with staff, with those the nonprofit serves, and with the broader community. Highlight how board meetings can build relationships. Foster healthy relationships within the board through mentorship, team-building, or non-board-related activities. Ask new board members to share their reasons for joining as well as their personal goals with fellow board members and allow them time to learn about what motivated other board members to join. This helps

ensure all board members, including people of color, are heard and valued.

3. BUILD ACCOUNTABILITY TO COMMUNITIES OF COLOR INTO YOUR CULTURE AND PROCESS. DON'T BE AFRAID TO LEARN AND IMPROVE.

Ensure that accountability to the value of racial equity is a job for the entire board, not just for the board members of color. Work with your board to develop and implement quantitative and qualitative diversity metrics that can be used to evaluate the organization's efforts to address issues of equity and inclusion. These metrics should be aligned with key organizational values and goals.

Conduct an evaluation of the board itself, giving each board member the opportunity to self-evaluate their role as a member and the board's overall performance in serving its stated purpose and goals, specifically around issues of equity and inclusion. Make sure the evaluation includes questions about the board's performance as well as the extent to which its cultural norms reflect white cultural norms.³¹ Staff and external stakeholders should also be given the opportunity to participate in the evaluation process. A third-party evaluation is a good option for facilitating honest and anonymous feedback.³²

Develop a board evaluation to figure out why board members, and people of color in particular, leave once their term is complete. Establish an exit interview process for board members so they can share their service experience. Establish methods of board accountability stemming from the feedback from the exit interviews.

4. GET INFORMED.

Do not rely on people of color to do the work of educating white people about issues of race. Offer annual racial equity training (this is different from diversity training) for board and staff, and consider making it a requirement for all board members. This is an easy way to begin acting on diversity and equity. According to our interviews, board members of color are subject to microaggressions³³ and systemic racism that negatively impact their experience. After internally evaluating the role of racial equity on your board, ensure

30 Tema Okun explores both characteristics of white cultural norms and antidotes to them in her article "White Supremacy Culture." See more in the Resources section of this report.

31 See "White Supremacy Culture" by Tema Okun

32 See Resources section at the end of this report for suggested tools to help.

33 For definitions on this and related racial equity terms, please refer to the glossary at the end of this report.

that future trainings focus on relevant topics. Go beyond annual training and take measures to educate the board on issues of racial equity, both as they show up internally in organizations, and within your organization's work.

5. HOW YOU RECRUIT MATTERS. EVALUATE YOUR RECRUITMENT PROCESS. FINDING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEAD IS BURDENSOME TO PEOPLE OF COLOR WHEN PUBLICITY OF THOSE POSITIONS DOES NOT REACH THEIR COMMUNITIES.

Look at who comes to your events: events are pivotal for scouting for board members. Have a certain amount of nominations for board service stem from relationships with those your organization has assisted. Add inclusive language to all of the organization's communications. All letters, annual reports, and all other forms of communication should mention board service as a possibility and provide an opportunity for people to inquire about board service. Provide information on the website about board governance, the board selection process, etc.

Reciprocity is a selling point for board service. Consider how board membership can serve the personal and professional goals of applicants. Ask your board members about the best part of their service, and use their answers to create the pitch for service on your board. Invite prospective board members to state their reasons for wanting to join your board and personal goals/motivations for board service. Include this question in a screening questionnaire.

6. AVOID TOKENISM.

Do not recruit, ask or expect new board members to serve solely as representatives of their race or ethnicity (or other parts of their identity, like ability, sexual orientation, gender, etc.). Figure out what skills or knowledge the board needs and look for people with those skills and knowledge who also share a passion for the mission of the organization. Be transparent and upfront about why you have reached out to this specific person and be specific about what they would bring to a board, highlighting their particular skills, connections, and knowledge. Refrain from asking people of color to be representatives of their community or ambassadors to bring people in. Do not use images of people of color in organizational materials if doing so presents a more diverse representation of your organization than is actually the case. Make sure you have permission from people to use their image.

CONCLUSION

There has been extensive quantitative research done over the years about the lack of diversity within board service. Our hope is that these qualitative interviews can add greater dimension to the already alarming statistics. The impact of predominantly white boards governing nonprofits has had harmful ramifications on communities of color; however, recruiting one or two people of color to serve on a board without doing any deeper reflection, or making any deeper changes towards inclusivity, equity, and belonging, may also have harmful impacts for those individuals. Tokenism still plagues predominant nonprofit board culture. Racist and hostile environments are also pervasive within nonprofit board service. People of color continue to bear the hurt and harm of racism within their service. The words of the respondents in this study speak to the desperate need for more inclusive board cultures and the overhauling of systemic racism evident in agricultural and environmental nonprofit board leadership.

We are grateful to all the interviewees who shared their experiences. It is our continual hope that their words and stories serve to foster increased change in board service in the years to come.

GLOSSARY

Below is a basic list of terms important to understand within racial equity work. Many are also used throughout the report. Most of these definitions have been adapted from the definitions by a variety of anti-racist thinkers and writers on the Racial Equity Tools Glossary website.³⁴

RACE is a social construct that classifies humans based on shared physical or cultural qualities into categories generally viewed as distinct by society. Race as a construct was first used to refer to speakers of a common language, then to denote national affiliations, and finally to refer to physical traits. Although categories of race have no scientific foundation, race is a powerful construct because of its relationship to, and uses within, systems of oppression as a form of control.³⁵

RACISM is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices. Racism can mean the existence of racial prejudice embedded within social and institutional power(s), a system of advantage based on race; a system of oppression based on race, or a white supremacist system.³⁶

WHITE SUPREMACY is the idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, inhuman, and “undeserving.” Drawing from critical race theory, the term “white supremacy” also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantages and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and at an individual level.³⁷

STRUCTURAL RACISM is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Structural racism encompasses the entire system of white domination, diffused and infused in all aspects of society, including its history, culture, politics, economics, and entire social fabric. Structural racism is more difficult to locate in a particular institution because it involves the reinforcing effects of multiple institutions and cultural norms, past and present, continually reproducing old, while also producing new forms of racism. Structural racism is the most profound and pervasive form of racism – all other forms of racism emerge from structural racism.³⁸ “Systemic racism” is often used interchangeably with “structural racism.”

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never, and often do not, mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.³⁹

34 <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#>

35 PBS, *Race: Power of an Illusion*; Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice* (Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2002), p.141.

36 “Racism Defined.” DRworksBook – www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html.

37 “Racism Defined.”

38 Structural Racism for the Race and Public Policy Conference, Keith Lawrence, Aspen Institute on Community Change and Terry Keleher, Applied Research Center; *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*. Maggie Potapchuk, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens and Barbara Major. 2005.

39 *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*. Maggie Potapchuk, Sally Leiderman, Donna Bivens and Barbara Major. 2005.

PREJUDICE is an unjustified attitude that one person holds against another because of their membership within a group or class of people. While everyone is prejudiced, social power structures influence the impact of prejudice based on social location. When expressed about oppressed groups of people, positive and negative prejudices are both damaging through the denial of individuality among members of an oppressed group. Prejudices held by members of an oppressed group often function as a survival strategy.⁴⁰

MICROAGGRESSION(S) are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.⁴¹

BLACK EMPOWERMENT may be understood as the realization of Black people's capacity for political, cultural, economic, and social self-determination. All power is relational, and relationships either reinforce or disrupt one another. The importance of the concept of power to anti-racism is clear: racism cannot be understood without understanding that power is not only an individual relationship but a cultural one, and that power relationships are shifting constantly. Power can be used malignantly and intentionally, but need not be. Individuals within a culture may benefit from power in ways which they are unaware of.⁴²

RACIAL EQUITY is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race, or fail to eliminate them.⁴³

RACIAL JUSTICE is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice 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. Put differently, racial justice is the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts, and outcomes for all.⁴⁴

DIVERSITY includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender — the groups that most often come to mind when the term "diversity" is used — but also age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, political beliefs, and physical appearance. A group or organization can be considered diverse without this diversity changing the basic racial power structures within the group.⁴⁵

40 Institute for Democratic Renewal and Project Change Anti-Racism Initiative. A Community Builder's Tool Kit.

41 Derald Wing Sue, "Microaggressions: More than Just Race," *Psychology Today*, November 17, 2010 – <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

42 Intergroup Resources, 2012 – <http://www.intergroupresources.com/power/>; Alberta Civil Liberties Research Center – <http://www.aclrc.com/racism-and-power>

43 Center for Assessment and Policy Development – <http://www.capd.org/white-privilege>

44 Race Forward, "Race Reporting Guide" – <https://www.raceforward.org/reporting-guide>; Catalytic Change: Lessons Learned from the Racial Justice Grantmaking Assessment Report, Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity and Applied Research Center, 2009.

45 UC Berkeley Center for Equity, Inclusion and Diversity, Glossary of Terms; Baltimore Racial Justice Action – <https://bmoreantiracist.org/resources/our-definitions>

INCLUSION is authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy-making in a way that shares power.⁴⁶ This is in contrast to either incorporating those who have been marginalized into an existing structure without sharing power or conversely, shifting power to institutions which marginalized groups have created for themselves.

MODEL MINORITY is a term created by sociologist William Peterson to describe the Japanese community, whom he saw as being able to overcome oppression because of their cultural values. While individuals employing the Model Minority trope may think they are being complimentary, in fact the term is related to colorism and its root, anti-Blackness. The model minority myth creates an understanding of ethnic groups, including Asian-Americans, as a monolith, or as a mass whose parts cannot be distinguished from each other. The model minority myth can be understood as a tool that white supremacy uses to dehumanize and pit people of color against each other in order to protect its status.⁴⁷ In other contexts, the term “model minority” may be used to describe a person of color seen by white people as an example of the success others with their racial identity could achieve if they conformed to white norms and expectations.

COLORISM is a term widely believed to have been created by author Alice Walker that refers to prejudicial treatment based on skin color among members of the same race. This discrimination is often based on the social implications from cultural meanings attached to skin color, which are an effect of white supremacy and racism.⁴⁸

"PEOPLE OF COLOR" (POC) is a collective term for non-white racial groups. Racial justice advocates have been using the term “people of color” (not to be confused with the pejorative “colored people”) since the late 1970s as an inclusive and unifying frame across different racial groups that are not white, to address racial inequities. While “people of color” can be a politically useful term, and describes people with their own attributes (as opposed to what they are not, e.g., “non-white”), it is also important whenever possible to identify people through their own racial/ethnic group, as each has its own distinct experience and meaning and may be more appropriate.⁴⁹ The term BIPOC, standing for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, is one way to acknowledge the ways oppression is experienced differently by Black and Native people. In this report we use the terms “farmers of color” and “board members of color” to refer to farmers and board members who are not white.

46 <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary#inclusion>

47 Asian American Activism: The Continuing Struggle – <https://blogs.brown.edu/ethn-1890v-s01-fall-2016/glossary/>

48 Tharps, Lori L., and Different Colors Same Family. “The Difference Between Racism and Colorism.” *Time*, Time, 6 Oct. 2016, time.com/4512430/colorism-in-america/; Leland Ware, “Color Struck”: Intragroup and Cross-racial Color Discrimination, 13 *Connecticut Public Interest Law Journal* 75-119

49 Race Forward, “Race Reporting Guide” – <https://www.raceforward.org/reporting-guide>

RESOURCES

ON DIVERSITY WITHIN NONPROFIT BOARDS

Leading with Intent: 2017 Index of Nonprofit Board Practices

by Board Source

<https://boardsource.org/research-critical-issues/nonprofit-sector-research/>

“Who serves on today’s nonprofit boards? How are they composed and organized? How do they conduct their work? How well are they fulfilling their many important roles and responsibilities? What impact are they having on organizational performance? Leading with Intent: 2017 BoardSource Index of Nonprofit Board Practices answered these questions as the latest in BoardSource’s series of studies tracking and analyzing trends in nonprofit board leadership since 1994.”

The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies

by Dorceta E. Taylor

<https://www.diversegreen.org/the-challenge/>

“[This report] surveyed 191 environmental non-profits, 74 government environmental agencies, and 28 leading environmental grant making foundations to investigate their gender and racial diversity composition, the majority of which state diversification as a “value.” The study included confidential interviews of 21 environmental leaders from diverse backgrounds and experience.”

Vital Voices: Lessons Learned from Board Members of Color

by Vernetta L. Walker and Deborah J. Davidson

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/boardsource.pdf>

“It is not enough to “diversify” a board; boards must be inclusive in their policies and practices, thereby creating a culture that encourages and nurtures diverse expression. We wanted to test how our belief in the importance of inclusivity played out in actual boardrooms, so we conducted a survey and series of focus groups in 2009-2010 and asked questions about attitudes toward and experiences with nonprofit board service. Unlike other methodologies reported in recent years, however, our survey focused exclusively on the attitudes and experiences of people of color who serve on nonprofit boards. We asked about recruitment practices, on-boarding processes, and board culture and dynamics to ascertain whether diversity was accompanied by inclusivity.”

ON RACIAL EQUITY WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

“White Supremacy Culture”

by Tema Okun

<http://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/whitesupcul13.pdf>

“White supremacy culture is the idea (ideology) that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. White supremacy culture is reproduced by all the institutions of our society... Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify... The characteristics listed in this article are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group and because they promote white supremacy thinking and behavior. The list of white supremacy characteristics includes: perfectionism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness, valuing quantity over quality, worship of the written word, belief in only one right way, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, belief that I’m the only one (who can do this ‘right’), the belief that progress is bigger and more, a belief in objectivity, and claiming a right to comfort.”

Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide

by the Annie E. Casey Foundation

<https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide/>

“The purpose of this guide is to add to the resources already created... by demonstrating how a race equity lens can be adopted by foundations or other organizations that work directly with systems, technical assistance providers and communities. Our aim is to provide key audiences with transferrable insights and tools that can help them understand what steps to take to make sure they are creating equitable opportunities for the populations they serve.”

Racial Justice Assessment Tool

by the Western States Center

http://stproject.org/toolkit_tool/racial-justice-organization-assessment/

This tool assesses the degree of an organization’s engagement with racial equity. The assessment is not specifically designed for boards, being organization-wide, but includes many questions relevant to or within the purview of a nonprofit board, and the process of responding to the assessment may point to some next steps needed.

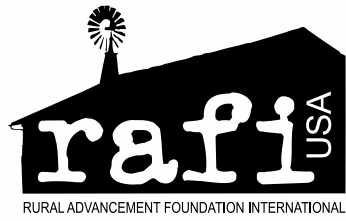
ON BOARD ASSESSMENT

Board Source has a variety of board assessment tools available for purchase:

<https://boardsource.org/board-support/assessing-performance/board-self-assessment/>

The National Council of Nonprofits has collected some resources for board self-assessments:

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/self-assessments-nonprofit-boards>



rafiusa.org