

# WHY IS EQUITY AND INCLUSION NECESSARY

America, and its founding fathers, created a brilliant and magnificent form of government, likely the best of its kind in the free world in human history. Its balance of power between tripartite branches, restraint of executive power, division of authority between a strong national government and federated states, provision of constitutional governance of the whole, allowance for complex, decentralized democracy down to the local level and within individual institutions, and establishment of a charter within which “all people are created equal” are outstanding. It is the last promise, the most important, which would make America uniquely great, which America has not kept to its people of color and other citizens.

The American colonies set the table for the dehumanization of people of color. For example, the 1660s Virginia Slave Codes, Act XII held that any child born to a black woman must also be forced into slavery. The codes ensured “that baptism of slaves doth not exempt them from bondage.” “If any slave resist[ed], ...masters, mistresses and overseers” must “correct” them, and if “by the extremity of the correction [they] die,...the master or other person appointed...[shall] be acquit[ted].” “Meetings...feasts and burials [are] judged of dangerous consequence” and “it shall not be lawful for any negroe...to carry or arm himself...nor to depart from his masters ground without a certificate...” If a negroe “presume[d] to lift up his/[her] hand in opposition against any Christian....thirty lashes on his bare back...[and] it shall be lawful for such person...to kill the said negroe...” The law forbade “that abominable mixture” of “white man or woman... with a negroe, mulatto, or Indian...” Violators were “banished and removed from this dominion forever” or “committed to prison...without bail.” To secure white supremacy, “no negroes, mullatos, or Indians, although Christians, or Jews, Moors, Mahometans, or other infidels, shall, at any time, purchase any Christian servant.” (Henning 1823)

The Constitutional Convention and founding fathers widely believed that black people were property and that any humanity assigned to them was of inferiority. 12 of America’s Presidents forced blacks into slavery and others defended it and segregation. The largest slaveholders were Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. Washington was among the few who “freed” his slaves upon his death.

Jefferson’s magnificent estate was run by superb black artisans, shoemakers, masons, carpenters and cooks, and he enjoyed a long sexual relation with a black woman with whom he fathered many children. Still, like many today, he held the white supremacist belief that the worst white person is better than the best black person. Jefferson was bested intellectually by his black contemporary, Benjamin Banneker who wrote to him:

**“...one universal Father hath given being to us all...and endowed us all with the same faculties...in the same relation to Him...it is the indispensable duty of those who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature and...Christianity, to extend their power... to the relief of every part of the human race...I am of the African race...under a sense of the most profound gratitude to the Supreme Ruler...Suffer me to recall to your mind that time in which the arms and tyranny of the British Crown were exerted...to reduce you to a state of servitude. This, Sir, was a time when you clearly saw into the injustice of a state of slavery...how pitiable it is to reflect that although you were so fully convinced of the benevolence of the Father of Mankind and of his equal and impartial distribution of these rights....that you should at the same time counteract his mercies in detaining by fraud and violence so numerous a part of my brethren under groaning captivity and cruel oppression...”**

**It would be centuries, to the time of Martin Luther King, Jr., before Banneker’s truth would be seriously listened to by a larger segment of America.**

**Congress was filled with slave owners and supporters. The third branch of government, the Supreme Court was the same. Its most noted Chief Justice, John Marshall (1801 – 1835) forced hundreds of black people into slavery. In 1836, Roger Taney, then, Chief Justice wrote: “the African race...even when free, are everywhere a degraded class, and exercise no political influence. The privileges they are allowed to enjoy; are accorded to them as a matter of *kindness and benevolence rather than right...They were not looked upon as citizens* by the contracting parties who formed the Constitution.” The majority opinion in the 1857 Dred Scott Case held that “[the framers thought blacks have] *no rights which the white man was bound to respect* and the negro might justly and lawfully [be] reduced to *slavery for his benefit*.” The Court blamed God for creating blacks as unalterably inferior. The Supreme Court did little to advance the cause of black people until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century.**

**America created race to justify a caste of Untouchables similar to India. Black status was set by quantities of blood: 75% made one black; 3/8 – 5/8 a mulatto; 25% a quadroon; 1/8 an octoroon. The “1 drop rule” suited fine to assign inferiority to all blacks. Whites measured black skulls, jaws and other features to prove that they were not human, or, if they were, of a distinct, inferior race. (Roberts 2011) Whites robbed graves and dissected black bodies to anatomically establish the same. (Washington 2006) Science has proved that DNA, not blood, forms our humanity and that 99.9% of it is identical with Africa as our common origin. (Wilkerson 2020; Roberts 2011)**

**America’s founders were mostly Christian so how did this happen? Slave owners and many churches justified slavery using the Bible. Genesis IX, 18-27, the story of Ham, the son of Noah, was used to establish blackness as the curse on Ham’s descendants after he looked at his father while drunken and naked. For other Christians, blackness entered the world as God’s punishment of Cain. Pro-slavery Americans and white supremacists argued that the Bible sanctioned slavery and nowhere prohibited it. Other Christians taught that slaves must submit to the state and their masters as religion could free their souls, not their bodies. Others argued that slavery was a political, not a religious concern. Prominent moderate**

spiritual leaders, such as George Whitefield (Anglican) and Jonathan Edwards (Calvanist) held slaves. Baptists and Methodists ruled that individual churches could decide whether black people were property instead of forbidding slavery as unchristian. Churches and white supremacists touted that it was the “White Man’s Burden” to subdue and civilize persons of color. With the same religious zeal, America justified the conquest of North America as God’s “Manifest Destiny.” Churches segregated black people to the “back of the bus” and many resisted black voting and office holding. While some Christians were anti-slavery, slavery and segregation could not have dominated America without Christian complicity. (Tisby 2019) Apparently, when so much power and wealth was acquired by using color to dominate people, it escaped the majority that no God worthy of worship, omnipotent and all good, would create any human unequal and not in his/her image.

The slave trade was sanctioned in the U.S. Constitution into the 1800s and blacks were counted as but 3/5 of a person to give greater power to slaveholding states and no power to the black people counted until 1868.

The American economy was built on the free labor of black people. Northern banking, mortgaging, textiles, exports and other businesses depended on slavery as did Southern plantations, agriculture, craftsmanship and commerce. While whites accumulated, were given by government, inherited and took by force capital, land, resources and power, and grew and passed that wealth to generations to the present, little wealth, power and credit was enjoyed by black people. Economists grapple to measure today’s value of the 250 year appropriation of wealth from people of color. As of 1860, the value of America’s 4 million slaves equaled close to 20% of all U.S. Wealth. (Fogel/ Gallantine/ Manning 1992; Darity/Mullen 2020) Researchers and economists estimate that the loss to African Americans ranges from \$ 24 to 100 trillion without factoring the human damage caused by forcing 17 generations of people into bondage. (Id; Harvard Black Letter Law Journal 2004)

And what of Indigenous, Native Americans? In 1823, the United States Supreme Court summed up the majority view of “Indians”:

“On the *discovery* of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe were eager to appropriate *to themselves* so much of it as they could...the character and religion of its inhabitants afforded an *apology* for considering them as a people over whom the superior genius of Europe might claim an ascendancy...they made *ample compensation* to the inhabitants... by bestowing on them civilization and Christianity... *discovery* gave an exclusive title [to the Continent] to the government...[and] an exclusive right to extinguish the Indian title...*Conquest* gives a title...These claims have been established...by the *sword*...It is not for the Courts...to question the validity of this title...[the] *savages*.... confidence in their security should gradually banish the painful sense of being separated from their ancient connexions, and united by force to strangers.”

The American military and government forced Indians off of their lands and onto desolate “reservations,” massacring thousands, and defied any suggestion that Indians had any rights

to land that they did not voluntarily cede. (Irons 2006) President Jackson, for example, dared any Court to “enforce” a contrary opinion and ordered the military to expel Creek, Chickasaw and Cherokee tribes from their lands and to violate all treaties, leading to the 1838 march of 17,000 Indians thousands of miles on the Trail of Tears to a reservation (now Oklahoma) in which about 25% died. (Id.; Dee Brown 1970)

But Lincoln “freed” the slaves and America became colorblind, right? America forfeited the opportunity to make this Continent free in the colonial period and the American Revolution. It did the same after the Civil War. Whites revolted against Emancipation and Reconstruction and got their way. For only 12 years were people of color able to exercise real voting rights, acquire some appreciable wealth, government jobs and seats in local, state and national government. Whites formed Citizens Groups, Claverns and many other organizations to disenfranchise blacks, enforce supremacist behavior codes, outlaw inter-racial marrying and stop blacks from owning land, businesses and their own labor in any equal sense. The KKK grew to 4 million members, who included judges, preachers, police, legislators, business leaders and educators. Legislatures passed new state constitutions and “Jim Crow Laws” to make black political, economic and social inferiority permanent. White mobs, often aided by law enforcement, legislators, courts and jurors, committed systemic terror on black neighborhoods, political gatherings, businesses, churches and workplaces, burning them to the ground, killing thousands, and driving people of color from their homes -- in Colfax, LA; the “Red Shirts” raids; in Memphis, TN; in Atlanta and Valdosta, GA (where black corpses were laid before Confederate monuments); in Kirvin, TX; in Groveland, FLA; in Florence County and in Abbeville, SC; in eastern and in Wilmington, NC; in East St. Louis, IL; in Tulsa, OK and countless other areas. Blacks were largely reduced to sharecropping, earning no pay or “owing money” after landowners deducted rent, tools and food. Those who opposed oppression were jailed as vagrants and leased to private businesses by the state. At least 4,000 black persons were lynched by whites with only 1% of cases prosecuted, near always resulting in acquittal by white juries. Black voter registrations collapsed, black majority districts disappeared and another black Senator was not elected to Congress for 85 years. (Dray 2003; Equal Justice Initiative 2017) When blacks migrated north to escape these conditions, they were segregated into deprived communities, denied equal participation in labor organizations, their houses were bombed and they were denied equal terms to capital for businesses and homes. Between 1930 – 1976, the U.S. justice system executed 455 men for rape of whom 90% were black; as of 1994, 78% of Americans executed for drug-related crimes were black; 90% of those executed could not afford a lawyer; and, as of 1996, the victim in 82% of case resulting in executions was white. (ACLU)

After the Civil War, the Supreme Court disemboweled the Bill of Rights, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments and the Ku Klux Klan Act, and ensured that black people would be unprotected against violence and quasi-slavery for another 100 years. (Slaughterhouse Cases 1873; Cruikshank v. U.S. 1876) In 1896, the Supreme Court made segregation the supreme law of the land. (Plessy v. Ferguson) In the Slaughterhouse Cases,

the Supreme Court insulted that blacks “ceased to be the favorite of the laws,” as if they were ever the favorite except to target them for dehumanization. The 1964 Civil Rights Act used the same language as the 1870s Reconstruction Amendments to curb private segregation before the Supreme Court finally moved.

The U.S. government was complicit throughout. Cotton accounted for more than 60% of all US exports before the Civil War. None of that wealth went to the black people who produced it. Nearly ¼ of all Southerners forced African Americans into slavery. By 1860, the value of slaves as a financial asset exceeded that of all American manufacturing, railroads and production capacity. (Coates 2014) The 1862 Homestead Act, over 60 years, gave 246 million acres of land to 1.5 million Americans, up to 160 acres per family, of who over 99% were white. The average value of an acre of land in America in 2020 is \$3,160. (USDA) That giving of 246 million acres to white families is the equivalent of giving \$520,000.00 to each white family today. In stark contrast, the 40 acres granted to blacks by General Sherman’s Field Order No. 15 after the Civil War (about 160 million acres) was overturned and given to former slave owners and Confederates. By 1870, blacks owned only .17% of all U.S. wealth and less than 1% of land. When blacks received credit, it was at higher rates which the government enforced as “freedom of contract.” During the 1933- 1940 “New Deal,” \$ 50 Billion in federal monies were distributed to Americans; less than 2% to African Americans. Agricultural and domestic workers, which dominated black employment, were intentionally excluded from the old age and unemployment insurance of the Social Security Act. The 1935 Wagner Act, which legalized labor unions, excluded non-whites. The G.I. Bill provided \$ 95 Billion in subsidies for soldiers for education, business ownership and home buying with no down payment; less than 2% went to black soldiers. Between 1934 – 1962, the U.S. granted \$120 Billion in subsidies, low interest and low down payment loans with 20 – 30 year amortizations to help Americans build generational wealth and the suburbs; less than 1% of those mortgages went to blacks. The FHA refused loans to black people who wanted to buy homes in white neighborhoods, and, overall, in most neighborhoods. The FHA racially divided America with maps which marked no-loan areas “red” and pro-loan areas “green;” its underwriting manuals provided that “properties shall continue to be occupied by the same...racial classes...” <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc/39.1/-94.58> During this period, the FHA insured almost 70,000 loans in Massachusetts worth nearly \$700,000,000.00 allowing explosive growth of Boston’s suburbs. Greater Boston realtors relied on the National Association of Real Estate Board’s “Code of Ethics,” Article 34, which pledged to “never” introduce into a neighborhood “members of any race or nationality... detrimental to property values...” By 1960, Sudbury quadrupled, Wayland tripled and Dedham grew by 150%, while their black residents totaled only 22, 11 and 23. By 1970, all Boston suburbs (except Cambridge) were about 98% white with whites enjoying exclusive and unprecedented opportunities to build homes, equity and wealth. (Boston Magazine 2020) The tax dollars of people of color were used to fund their segregation. Black people were forced to buy homes under private Contract Sale at higher interest, inflated prices and

to forfeit their homes and equity if they missed one payment. A new black buyer would be had and the same process of land theft renewed. By 1950, about 85% of black home ownership in Chicago was by Contract Sale. (Rochester 2017) In 1992, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston found that Black and Hispanic mortgage applications were 60% more likely to be denied than Whites. (Munnell, Browne, McEneaney and Tootell) If government and private redlining, mob terror, white block associations, restrictive covenants and other segregation tools proved insufficient, whites fled neighborhoods and took with them their control of more than 90% of America's wealth to further damage black neighborhoods. (Coates 2014) Black voters across America were further disenfranchised by poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation and murder and systemic gerrymandering.

And what happened to our schools? America has the embarrassing distinction of being the only country to prohibit the education of persons forced into slavery. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, Mississippi, Alabama and North Carolina passed laws making it illegal to teach slaves to write and to abolish colored schools and/or to deny blacks access to public schools. Persons and teachers who violated these laws were subject to heavy fines and public whippings. These laws were designed to keep black people in bondage, cripple their ability to compete, conceal abolitionist ideas, the Haitian Revolution, Britain's end of slavery, the Underground Railroad and to prevent travel, escape and aspirations for a better life. In 1849, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court upheld school segregation in *Roberts v. City of Boston*. Judges sought refuge in dictum that "segregation is not created by law, and *cannot be changed by law*" (Roberts); desegregation "conflict[s] with the general *sentiment of the community*" (1883 NYSCT Brooklyn) and "[if segregation promotes inferiority], it is solely because the *colored race choose to put that construction upon it....[however] if one race be inferior to the other* socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane." (1896 USSCT Plessy) By the time of the Civil War, only 5% of African Americans were literate.

Up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, blacks were excluded from higher learning and elementary schools. Missouri offered to pay Lloyd Gaines to go to law school in another state; Oklahoma roped off a space in its state house to create a "black law school" with no library or faculty to exclude Ada Sipeul; Texas set up a "law school" in the basement of an office building with no library, facilities or full time instructors to exclude Marion Sweat; and Oklahoma placed a chair in a hallway, forbid the shared use of its bathrooms and cafeteria and hung a sign which read "Reserved for Colored" for George McLaurin to keep him out of graduate classes. (Irons 2016)

Although it might not seem possible, America treated children of color in elementary schools worse. Up to the 1950s, South Carolina kept black children illiterate in shacks with no plumbing or electricity and minimal academic resources; in 1954, Delaware closed its public schools as 1500 whites viciously protested black children entering Milford High and vowed to form the "National Association For The Advancement of White People"; in 1954, Georgia's Lt.

**Governor pronounced it “reasonable” to delay integration up to another “two hundred” years; in 1957, Arkansas’ Governor staged an insurrection to keep black children out of Central High with bayonets, threats of “lynching” and white mobs storming the school; in 1962, Mississippi’s Governor defied James Meredith’s admission to the University of Mississippi and ordered the state police to expose unarmed U.S. Marshalls and blacks to a deadly riot; in 1963, Alabama’s Governor blocked the doors of the University of Alabama to keep two black students out and incited a life threatening riot by a white mob. (Id.)**

**African Americans who dared to place their children in American schools were punished mercilessly: white banks and stores cancelled their credit; white businesses refused to rent them equipment destroying their crops; city officials, hotels, garages and trucking companies fired them from their jobs; banks and farm mortgagors foreclosed on them. Americans have always paid a price for seeking educational equity and inclusion. After the U.S. Supreme Court ordered school integration in Brown v. Board of Education, and white parents faced the prospect that their children may be taught by black teachers, tens of thousands of black teachers and administrators were displaced and/or lost their jobs; in the South, near 90% of black principals lost their jobs. America has never recovered from the shortage of black teachers. In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Milliken v. Bradley, drew more redlines for white suburbs to exempt them from integration orders on grounds that they were “de facto” not “de jure” segregated when the suburbs were plainly purposefully racially segregated, by private and public actors, across America. (Rothstein 2017)**

**Where are we in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? The Univ. of Chicago found that job applications with white sounding names in the Boston and Chicago Want Ads received 50% more call backs than those with black sounding names until those resumes showed 8 or more years of experience. (American Economic Review 2004) Whites with criminal convictions received more call backs than blacks without one. (Arizona St. Univ.; US DOJ 2014) More than 1/3 of Americans still oppose affirmative action. The U.S. Small Business Administration gives loans to Americans to finance the American Dream of owning a small business; as of 2007, black Americans received less than 2% of these loans. Only .04% of all deposits in the United States are held in black owned banks. On-line products offered by white sellers gain higher prices than those offered by black sellers. (Harvard Business School/Air BNB study 2014; Rand Journal of Economics 2015) In 2011, the National Association of Realtors established that black homebuyers are shown about 20% less homes than whites. Like job applicants, persons with black sounding names receive less response and less preferential mortgage terms with the same credit and FICO scores as whites. (Journal of Urban Economics 2016) As of 2017, of 147 municipalities that make up Greater Boston, more than 60 were at least 90% white. (Boston Magazine 2020) Directly related, the 2015 Federal Reserve Bank of Boston established that the median wealth of white household’s in Greater Boston was \$ 247,500 versus \$ 8 for black households. Nationally, the average household net worth of white Americans is about 8 X greater than black Americans. White Americans are 5X more likely to inherit wealth and that inheritance is likely to be 10 X larger than black Americans. White**

Americans are 4 X more likely to have business equity than black Americans and that equity is likely to be 7 X larger. (Rochester 2017; see also Fed Reserve Bank of Boston, Duke Univ. and New School 2015) By 2000, near 85% of teachers were white and near 40% of public schools had not 1 black teacher. Despite having had a black President and a few black billionaires, of America's 615 Billionaires, only 6, .009%, are African American. (Business Insider 2020) Only about 2% of Fortune 500 CEOs, law firm partners, investment professionals and new tech hires are black. 2% or less lawyers and doctors are black men or women. 2% or less of U.S. land is owned by black people. 2% or less of agricultural subsidies are received by black farmers. (Rochester 2017) People of color are subjected to traffic stops, detentions and searches at astronomically disparate rates to whites causing fear, trauma, and death to black families and forcing them to have "The Talk" with their children. (Alexander 2020) The problem is so obvious that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has noted that police are not following the anti-racial profiling statutes and documentation requirements and that youth of color have a reasonable fear of police which must be factored in judicial decision making. (Comm. v. Evelyn 2020; Comm. v. Long 2020) Massachusetts incarcerates its black citizens at nearly 8 X the rate of its white citizens and its Hispanic citizens at nearly 6 X that rate. (CJPP Harvard Law 2020) African Americans have the highest mortality for all cancers combined; as compared to whites, blacks suffer 2 X the infant mortality, 2-3 X the mortality of mothers giving birth, 60% more diabetes and are 2.5 X more likely to require related amputation and 5.6 X more likely to suffer related kidney disease, are 4 X more likely to die from a stroke between ages 35 – 54, suffer higher rates of hypertension, HIV and heart disease, are 3 X more likely to die from Covid 19, 3X more likely to die from asthma, are 2 X as likely to have no medical insurance, 2 X less likely to receive psychological care, less likely to receive adequate medical care, more likely to live in neighborhoods with few or no PCPs, in environments which damage their long-term health by exposure to hazardous material, to be subjected to generational poorer housing due to segregation, to suffer from inequitable access to remote learning, food, transportation and medical testing, and to have low paying jobs with no sick leave or child care. (Harvard Chan School of Public Health; CDC; Denoon 2020; Hostetter, Klein 2018; Smedly, Stith, Nelson 2003)

After 400 years, over 40 million black Americans own just 2% of all American wealth and suffer gross disparities in most all of life. Still white Americans express fear, rage and the belief that people of color get everything, when white privilege is as powerful as ever and whites control 90% of US wealth. (Breunig 2014) What seems most unsettling to many whites is that America's voting demographics are finally beginning to empower voters of color in urban area and metropolitan suburbs, which is projected to increase in the future.

American culture has consistently told people of color, no matter how contradicted by reality, that America is colorblind and everyone has what they have because of their ability and work. Therefore, people of color, especially black and Indigenous peoples must not work hard enough and are inferior. People of color have always been as able, endowed, hard-working and morally entitled as Europeans. If anything, in early America, they worked harder



than anyone. To borrow from the Supreme Court, they have lacked the power of “the sword.”

Equity and inclusion helps Americans understand that we are and have always been relatively equal in our endowments, abilities and human value. We, and much of the world, have used color, religion, warfare, wealth and other instruments of power to create the illusion that some are better and more deserving than others. Little have the voices of children or people of color been heard in our town halls, schools, police and fire departments, businesses, health departments, especially in the majority of U.S. territory where whites constitute the majority.

How many adults or children know that a black man, Daniel Hale Williams performed the first open heart surgery in America; that Norbert Rillieux, invented the vacuum pan evaporator to revolutionize the world’s sugar industry; that Jan Earnst Matzelger invented a lasting machine to mass produce shoes in America whose patents were sold to a conglomeration which captured 98% of the U.S. shoe industry in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; that the saying “That’s the Real McCoy” refers to the authenticity of the automatic, lubricator cup invented by Elijah McCoy which dramatically improved steam engines; that Granville T. Woods was the black version of Thomas Edison with his inventions of a telephone transmitter, railway telegraphy and telephony; that Charles Drew performed path breaking work on blood preservation to make blood banks possible; that Garrett Morgan invented the first traffic light signal and the “Safety Hood” which became the gas mask used by firemen and later by soldiers in WWI; that Madam C.J. Walker (1867 – 1919), entrepreneur, activist, philanthropist, was America’s first female, self-made, millionaire. Many of these Americans were banned from universities, businesses, public places, churches and remain largely unknown. (Haber 1970)

This author is Christian, American, Capitalist and White, proud of them all, and fearless to challenge their shortcomings. Why do we fear this? Why do we not want our children to know these truths? Why do adults not want to hear and to know them? And why do we not want people of color to enjoy the same full throated voices as whites, the same wealth and affluence, the same housing, the same political power, the same pride in having made America, the same representation in our town halls, schools, businesses, police departments, libraries, hospitals, government agencies and families.

As this article makes clear, Dedham is neither exempt nor unique in America’s unbroken history of systemic racism.

The Dedham Public Schools, however, has chosen to be anti-racist and to concern itself with equity. The HRC is proud of this. We must let our children learn, as many of prior generations, were deprived. This learning does not come by itself. Most every effort to advance such learning over 400 years is met with hostility and resistance. Staying quiet and complicit maintains the status quo and allows disparities and privileges to persist. An anti-racist education will allow all of our children and families to get to a better place together, to

speaking truths, even when uncomfortable, and to find our common humanity so that one day America will be a country where “all people are created and treated equal.”

The HRC has worked productively with the Dedham Police Chief to improve de-escalation policies, community access and conversations with families of color, and to promote knowledge of the Department’s accreditation efforts, implicit bias training, anti-profiling record keeping and citizen’s academy opportunities. The HRC loves Blue Lives and supports BLM’s vital attention to a race of people who have been dehumanized. White lives have always mattered most in America. Black lives have not. Working to silence this message by interjecting “All Lives Matter” causes more suffering to long-ignored voices. Silencing black people by charging that they or their ally’s talk of racial problems is “divisive” further harms people of color, who know that America is not color blind and that race drives outcomes which are grossly disparate to human endowments, ability, work and worth.

The HRC has participated in meeting with students of color who have navigated through the Dedham Public Schools, and they vulnerably shared their disparate experiences in Dedham with members of our select board, school committee, principals and other town leaders, to emphasize Dedham’s need to be intentional in promoting antiracism and equity and inclusion.

The HRC has collaborated with the Anti-Racism Coalition and communities of color to produce positive television programming to familiarize neighbors with one another, increase representation of persons of color in town government and town life, to foster town wide courageous conversations around racial equity, and to celebrate and amplify the voices of color in Dedham.

The HRC has collaborated with the Dedham Historical Society to tell the stories of all, including those whose stories have gone untold, and to make our museum a place for everyone. We recognize the contributions of those named Ames, Avery, Fisher and Sprague to Dedham and any of their contributions to marginalizing people. The HRC and DHS collaborated to give a student of color the opportunity to research town archives and periodicals to better understand Dedham. We have collaborated to recognize Dedham’s African American Gould family of 150 years past and support the Gould Project which has already caused a town park to be named after William V. Gould and is working to persuade the Dedham Schools to include the Gould family history in the curriculum. Mr. Gould’s great grandson, an Emeritus Professor of Law at Stanford, participated in Dedham’s 4<sup>th</sup> Annual MLK Day Celebration, regularly exchanges human rights ideas with the HRC and he has been appointed to independently study the EEO and labor practices of San Francisco.

The HRC has collaborated with the Dedham Public Library to enrich town programming in the area of Mental Health, to promote readings and offerings to children, adults and families on diversity and to guide residents to area human rights resources.

**The HRC is actively working with leaders of town government and leaders of color, with the assistance of one of Massachusetts' most respected moderators, to make space for town wide, courageous conversations about race and inclusion, conversations Dedham's communities of color deeply want once assured of Dedham's government's unified commitment to equity and inclusion.**

**The HRC collaborates with individuals, businesses and organizations in Dedham to produce one of the Boston area's best Martin Luther King, Jr. celebrations.**

**The HRC supports the growing equity and inclusion efforts of neighboring Massachusetts towns and cities including Hingham's Unity Council, Duxbury's adoption of a formal equity, inclusion and diversity statement in cooperation with its equivalent of Dedham's Anti-Racism Coalition known as Prejudice Free Duxbury and actively pursues collaborations with other neighboring towns and cities.**

**The HRC and communities of color know that Dedham has had few to no persons of color as Police executives, Select Board members, Town Managers, Superintendents, Planning Board members and teachers, fire, parks and recreation, public works or nurse employees. Of today's 273 Town Meeting Members, only 2 have black skin. We know that families and children of color have felt uncomfortable, unrepresented and like visitors instead of equal stake holders of Dedham. Dedham must now decide whether it will be a part of continuing America's resistance and hostility to equity and inclusion, or, whether it will be a model town and become comfortable being uncomfortable, so that we all may build and share Dedham on equal footing and ensure that everyone, as the majority population has for 4 centuries, has equitable enjoyment, representation and experience of life in Dedham.**

**The HRC has recently been asked why Dedham needs equity and anti-racism education. This article should make that clear. Resources abound which explain these concepts in further depth. White residents of Dedham, for example, including educators and parents of children in Dedham's DEI classes, spoke eloquently, fairly and responsibly at the School Committee's January 2021 Meeting about the meaning and need of DEI programs. Given that America's race problem is probably its most longstanding and important, these resources should be given serious and lengthy study by all. Below are just a few resources which may assist.**

African American Firsts, J. Potter (2009); Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism, B Hooks (1981); At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America, P. Dray (2003); Before the Mayflower, L. Bennett, Jr. (1988); Between the World and Me, T. Coates (2015); Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think and Do, J. Eberhardt (2019); Black Pioneers of Science and Invention, L. Haber (1970); Boston Confronts Jim Crow, 1890 – 1920, M. Schneider (1997); Caste, I. Wilkerson (2020); Dismantling Desegregation, G. Orfield (1996); Everyday Anti-Racism: Getting Real About Racism in School, M. Polluck (2008); Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics and Big Business Re-Create Racism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, D. Roberts (2011); Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African Americans, 1619 – 2019, I.

Kendi and K. Blain (2021); From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, W. Darity and K. Mullen (2020); From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans, J.H. Franklin (2009); “How has Boston Gotten Away with Being Segregated So Long,” (Bo. Mag. 2020); How to Be an Anti-Racist, I. Kendi (2019); Lynching In America, Equal Justice Initiative (2015); “In Boston, Interactive Exhibit Brings Redlining Impact Home,” (Boston Interactive 2019); “Racial Disparities in the Massachusetts Criminal System, “ Harvard Law (2020); Reconstruction 1863 – 1877, E. Foner (1988); Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children In A Racially Unjust America (Harvey 2017); So You Want To Talk About Racism, I. Oluo (2018); Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You, J. Reynolds and I. Kendi (2020); The Black Tax, S. Rochester (2017); “The Case for Reparations,” Coates (2014); The Color of Compromise, J. Tisby (2019); The Color of Law, R. Rothstein (2017); The Color of Wealth, Fed Res Bk of Bo. (2015); The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, M. Alexander (2020); The Unsteady March, P. Klinker and R. Smith (1999); Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice, P. Kivel (2017); Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparties in Health Care, Smedly, Stith and Nelson (2018); White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism, R. DiAngelo (2018); Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria, B. Tatum (2017)

**In closing, while this article has focused primarily on the application of DEI principles to race, the same principles apply, for example, to the unjust treatment of women, the less able, the LGBTQ community and older adults.**

**Joseph C. Borsellino, Chair**

**On Behalf of,**

**The Dedham Human Right’s Commission**