

Dialogue4Health Web Forum

Creating Change Through Leadership: Two Extraordinary Leaders, a Mother and Daughter, Share Their Experiences Promoting Racial Equity

Thursday, November 01, 2018

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>> Laura Burr: Welcome to today's Dialogue4Health web forum, Creating Change Through Leadership: Two Extraordinary Leaders, a Mother and Daughter, Share Their Experiences Promoting Racial Equity. We thank Trust For America's Health and sponsors, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the California Endowment, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. My name is Laura Burr and I will be running today's web forum with my colleague, Tonya Hammond.

Now I would like to introduce Dr. J. Nadine Gracia, moderator on this series on Taking Action to Promote Health Equity.

She is Executive Vice-president and Chief Operating Officer at Trust For America's Health where she works in partnership with the President and CEO to develop and implement strategic policy priorities and manages TFAH's core business functions and internal operations. She has extensive leadership and management experience in federal government, professional associations, academia and clinical practice.

Prior to joining TFAH, Dr. Gracia served in the Obama Administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Welcome back, Nadine.

>> Nadine Gracia: Thank you, Laura. And thank everyone in the audience for joining us today on our web forum. With that let me welcome everyone to our final webinar in this four-part webinar series on the topic of equity, Creating Change Through Leadership: Two Extraordinary Leaders, a Mother and Daughter, Share Their Experiences Promoting Racial Equity, which in light of the recent tragic events in our nation is a timely discussion.

Whether this is the first webinar in this series that you are attending or if you have attended all or parts of the series, we are glad you are here to engage on this important topic of equity.

On behalf of Trust For America's Health, I'm so pleased to moderate this webinar series. Trust For America's Health is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public health policy, research and advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C.

We envision a nation that values the health and wellbeing of all, and where prevention and health equity are foundational to policymaking at all levels of society.

To recap, in partnership with the California Endowment, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, our goal for this webinar series has been to shine a bright

light on some of the most compelling and replicable activities that help advance health equity in every community.

Our first webinar was a panel discussion on a transformational effort to promote equity. The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative.

A ten-year one billion dollar comprehensive community initiative that seeks to transform the conditions in 14 communities in California that are burdened by health inequities in a manner that has never been attempted on this scale. Our second webinar focused on innovative funding models that are addressing health equity, including the successful health equity zones in Rhode Island in which the Rhode Island Department of Health uses categorical funding to advance community-driven equity efforts as well as the green and healthy homes initiative pay for success model which is advancing evidence-based interventions that efficiently connect funding to meaningful health, economic, and social outcomes to foster health equity for people in low income communities.

Most recently, our third webinar focused on innovative collaborations and lessons learned in working effectively with multi-sectoral partners to ensure lasting community health and equity where we featured the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and several of its grantees.

If you were not able to tune in for any of the previous three webinars, the recordings are available at the Trust For America's Health website at TFAH.org and also at the [Dialogue4Health](http://Dialogue4Health.org) website and Dialogue4Health.org.

Now, as a reminder, these webinars are conducted as conversations with those who are involved in the work of advancing health equity rather than as a formal panel with set presentations. This will allow us to more deeply explore the innovative approaches and discuss the opportunities, challenges, and lessons learned.

So now let's turn to today. The theme of our final webinar in this series is *Creating Change Through Leadership: Two Extraordinary Leaders, a Mother and Daughter, Share Their Experiences Promoting Racial Equity*. Leadership is such an essential ingredient in making lasting change to advance equity and population health. In today's discussion, two transformative leaders will speak about the connections between racism and health inequity and share insights about engaging all members of a community, including your own organization in the common purpose of a just society with equitable opportunities.

It is my pleasure to introduce our distinguished panel who represent a wonderful culmination of this health equity webinar series, two leaders whom I greatly admire and who set a tremendous example for so many of us in the nation as champions of equity and opportunity.

Our first panelist today, Dr. Gail Christopher, whom we at Trust For America's Health are so fortunate to have as the chair of our board of directors. She is also President and founder of Ntianu Center for Healing and Nature. A scholar and long-time national leader, Dr. Christopher previously served as senior advisor and vice-president at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Prior to that she was vice-president of the joint center for political and economic studies, office of health, women, and families. She directed the joint center's policy institute, a multiyear initiative created to engage underserved, racial and ethnic minorities in health policy discussions.

Our second panelist is Ms. Heather McGhee, the Immediate Past President and now Distinguished Senior Fellow at Demos, working for an America where we all have an equal say in democracy and equal chance in our economy. A recognized thought leader on the national stage, Heather advances equal chance and opportunities through or national media appearances. Serves as contributor to NBC news and frequently appears on shows such as meet the press. Her writings have appeared in outlets such as New York Times, The Nation and The Hill.

For the first time in a national forum these two inspiring leaders who are mother and daughter, will discuss how change is created at the individual, community, organizational and systems levels. They will offer concrete examples of how leaders can experience inside out change in order to be effective equity leaders.

During our conversation today they will also focus on our nation's unfinished work towards racial equity and the need to change the narrative and the beliefs that fuel inequalities. We are so honored to have you with us today for this important conversation.

Now, before we start our discussion, I want to bring up on your screens poll question number 2. We'll wait a moment to get that poll question up.

All right, poll question number 2: To what degree does your organization focus on advancing racial equity? The choices are: Almost always, often, sometimes, seldom, or not at all.

As you are completing that poll question, a reminder that the audio and slides for this web forum will be available to download on the Dialogue4Health website as well as the TFAH website following the web forum.

We will close our poll and see our responses thus far for today.

Those responses should come up momentarily.

A reminder as we go through the discussion today to please think of questions and answers that you have, questions that you have. We will have a question and answer session after we have opening discussion. So we have a spread with regard to the poll questions. Where we've got about 23 percent say almost always. 30 percent, often. Sometimes, 30 percent. Seldom, 11 percent. And not at all, 3 percent.

So really, I think a broad audience as far as the scale and range with regard to whether or not your organization focuses on advancing racial equity. So with that, polling question, it is now my pleasure to start our panel discussion. And as I mentioned before we will have a question and answer session. Please do submit questions and we'll then open it up for Q & A.

Gail and Heather, such an honor and pleasure to have you here today. As we start out this conversation on promoting racial equity and overcoming the beliefs that divide us, it would be helpful for our audience to give context, define what we mean by these terms of racism, racial equity, prejudice and discrimination to be sure that everyone listening today has the same understanding for this discussion.

From your perspectives, talk to us and tell us what is racism? What is meant by racial equity?

>> Gail Christopher: Heather and I are in different places. We will have to sort of manage to not talk at the same time. But I'll take on racism, which over many decades of looking at multiple definitions I really do believe it is action that is taken based on a belief in superiority of one's race. Action that is aggressive and discriminatory. The core fundamental basis of racism is really a belief, a false ideology in a hierarchy of human value, which dates back, the con seventh a taxonomy of humanity dates back many centuries, all the way back to the 16th and 15th centuries.

But this notion that somehow the human family can be grouped as a hierarchy and values an attributes can be ascribed based on physical characteristics. That forms the core of racism. So I will leave it at that and invite Heather to talk about equity, racial equity.

>> Heather McGhee: I agree with what Dr. Christopher said, that the belief in a hierarchy of human value, the idea that some groups of people are simply better than others is really at the core. And race as we know is a social construction. We are all actually part of the human race. Yet in order to justify the pursuit of profit through colonization, through slavery, the idea of different subspecies within the human race was created.

I think it is very important that we really all understand how much that belief that some groups of people are better than others, remains with us today. It is at the core of anti-Semitism, of sexism, of many of the beliefs that drive war and international strife, that is creating so much of a migration crisis.

It is even at the core of the class inequality that we have today. The idea that some people can be worth \$10,000 an hour where their colleagues at the same company are worth seven dollars an hour.

I think we really need to, in the work that we do, those of us who are committed to social justice or committed to healthcare and wellbeing and community, to understand how much that belief is shaping so many of the problems that we have today. The belief in a hierarchy of human value. Now, what is the solution to that? The answer is racial equity. I think my mom would say that the path to racial equity is through healing. I'm sure she'll talk about that. But racial equity as the slide earlier showed is different than the idea of equality. Equality is often thought of equality of treatment. I do exactly the same thing to everyone in the room and, therefore, we have an equal society.

But of course, we know that is not the case because different people and communities are situated differently. And different interventions, as of course the people on this webinar know, can have different levels of impact based on how a community or person or family is situated and ready to receive them.

So equity is the idea of going to the person or the community where they are and giving them the resources, the treatment that they need in order to achieve real opportunity and security and health.

So that's the difference between equality and equity, so well visualized in that illustration of the different sized boxes needed to make sure that everyone can see over the fence. Racial equity is absolutely what we need to have at the heart when we are thinking about healthcare, which as our conversation will unfold, is so much about seeing the way different systems and practices put people in different situations to thrive and to receive care in different ways.

>> Nadine Gracia: Thank you.

>> Gail Christopher: I absolutely concur with everything that was said. In America it is critically important that any equity efforts be knowledgeable of and take into account the historic impact of past policies and practices and wrongs. We can't operate in a vacuum. If we are going to put in place opportunities for equity and fairness, we have to take into account the historic patterns that have led to where we are today. So I just want to emphasize that too.

>> Nadine Gracia: Thank you, Gail and Heather. Those are helpful framing definitions for our audience. Hearing terms like hierarchy and value, which often we don't describe as we think about racism and racial equity. When you utilize that frame, you bring, I think, a more inclusive dialogue of talking about value and certainly what the character of our nation is, not valuing someone based totally on their color. That is helpful to those definitions of equality and equity which really, Heather, you pointed out stating that different people in communities are situated differently. So how do we achieve that fairness to equity as a goal.

So when we talk about racism and the goal of striving for racial equity, we can also talk about prejudice and discrimination and how that is, therefore, then manifested, right, as an underlying cause, being racism.

Can you talk more about how prejudice then and discrimination may be manifested and specifically, for example, Gail, why that is important as it relates to health?

>> Gail Christopher: Specifically being devalued essentially, being treated unfairly, perhaps in a very aggressive and overt ways sometimes in subtle ways, it has an effect on us physically. We are as human beings relational by design, relational is how we were wired to be. It is a fundamental imperative for human development.

We know that when we are excluded and when we experience the interpersonal dynamics of discrimination and prejudice, we experience reactions to that, adverse and stressful reactions to that.

There are also the adversities that come from exposure to the structural challenges, be it poverty and criminal justice and bias. There are many unlimited opportunities for exposure to the structural aspects of discrimination and racism. On an interpersonal level, that is real too. And we develop patterns of protection and defense. And we know that keeping our body in a state of protracted alarm has been shown by research to lead to specific physiological dynamics.

We know, for instance from the work of Dr. Tene Lewis, looking at everyday discrimination, the evidence developed by Dr. David Williams, the analysis of results of use of that particular survey, it links very definitely to coronary artery calcification, inflammatory processes that lead to compromised immunity. We know that exposure to discrimination and stress of that can elevate blood pressure. All of these things, mind you, are definite health disparities. We have learned to call them health inequity, cognitive impairment, difficulty with sleep. Sleep is a precursor for wellbeing. This all adds up to greater mortality. Of course, even the obesity patterns that we see in society are related to stress and can be related to discrimination.

So for those of us in the health field, the issue of eliminating -- the belief in racial hierarchy and its consequences should, I believe, be a primary focus. Which is why it is under girded my life's work for many, many decades.

>> Nadine Gracia: Wonderful, Gail. As you said, putting this elimination of that kind of racial hierarchy really at the core of what we do because so many of us who are focused on advancing equity really understand that foundation is so important and should be infused in everything that we do.

You have both been truly organizational leaders, really leveraging your roles to advance racial equity. I would like to spend a little bit of time talking in particular to both of you about some of the organizational work that you have had underway. Gail in particular, the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation initiative. Heather alluded to this as well, the importance of racial healing as part of this process. This is a process -- not a program, but a process.

Can you tell us more about this initiative, why it was started? What it was aimed to accomplish? Who is involved? And your ongoing work with TRHT.

>> Gail Christopher: First of all, I want to say thank you to the many philanthropic entities, particularly, of course, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation that has led this work and continues to support it around the country, the California Endowment, its partner, and many other local community foundations that are partners.

Essentially the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation, TRHT effort is actually an adaptation of the globally recognized Truth and Reconciliation Commission process.

This has happened in 40 places around the world. This effort, TRHT was an attempt to learn from those efforts and bring together a diverse group of organizations representing all sectors of society, over 140 of them, to adapt the core principles of truth and reconciliation to the unique, centuries long history of racial hierarchy in this country. We say transformation because we know that America was created on the fundamental premise of a hierarchy. Reconcile, suggests

to go back, come back together. We have to realize we were never together as a country. We always were grounded in this fallacy of hierarchy. That's why we say transformation. We say racial healing because we absolutely know that this has harmed everyone in this society and it actually harms our potential as a country. I know Heather will talk more about our economic viability as a country and how that is harmed by adherence to this crazy idea of racial hierarchy.

The truth is -- that's why we start with truth. The truth is, this is a part of who we are as a country. We need to face that history. We need to come to grips with that history. And we need to collectively design a future for our country that will allow us to actualize our aspirational values of the right, the inalienable right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

That is the big goal of TRHT. There are many, many groups around the country involved in it. I will talk briefly about the framework up on the screen because it really is grounded in a five-part framework. The first is, the truth requires that we change the narrative about who we are and how we got to be who we are. We need to hear from the voices who are usually not heard from. The indigenous people, the diverse immigrant groups, those who were formerly enslaved, descendents of enslaved people. We need to make sure that all voices are part of the story of America. And those voices are the European immigrants, the Asian-American, Pacific island, Mexican American immigrants, indigenous people, that is the narrative part, changing our story. Every discipline has a unique story, every organization has a unique story. Trying to figure out and retell those narratives in a much more expansive way.

Then the second piece of the framework is what we call racial healing. And relational work. It's building trust. It's bringing people together across racial divides. So that we can have deep sympathy and deep compassion and deep understanding. And one approach to this is through circles that are definitely facilitated so that the circles are safe and the experiences are not harmful or alienating.

Then the bottom part of that framework answers the question: If we know this idea of a hierarchy of human value is a fallacy, we know it is not true. Science tells us that. The genome tells us. Anthropology tells us that and has for decades. So how has it been maintained for so many years? We know the key vehicle for it has been through separation. Residential segregation is one of the most effective public policies this country ever implemented. I encourage people to read "The Color of Law" by Richard Rothstein. We also know that our legal system was a primary tool of maintaining racial hierarchy. It was during the years of enslavement and continues to be in many instances a tool of discrimination and unfair treatment. Also the civil legal system also reflects this.

Then finally, ultimately, it is through the economy. The economy benefits from this on the surface, it seems to benefit. It benefits some, put it that way. There is a wonderful piece of work done at the Kellogg Foundation called The Business Case for Racial Equity. It shows how we would in fact benefit if we close these gaps and did achieve equity. Those are pieces of the TRHT framework and organizations and communes around the country are implementing that framework and doing that work collectively there are partnerships with the Kellogg foundations and other organizations, the American Library Association is a partner, American Public Health Association, American Society of Universities, collectively representing people who have designed this and are actively committed to reaching this sense of our common humanity and healing from the history that we have.

>> Nadine Gracia: Gail, you articulated so many lessons and points with regard to the Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation. It shows the importance of collaboration which we have

been talking about through this web forum series. It is not one agency working alone but many organizes, many community, people who don't have a seat at the table having a voice. That is something we discussed in our webinars, that all sectors of society have a role. And that it is inclusive in that work and it really is a collective approach.

Even in the terms that you are using, they are healing words of empathy and compassion and understanding. As we talk about racism and racial healing, it is how that narrative also changes with regard to the words and the terms that we use. We will talk about the narrative even more so as we move along in our conversation today.

Heather, you are the immediate past President and now Distinguished Senior Fellow at Demos, a public policy organization. It will be wonderful for you to tell us more about Demos has a very intentional name. And its mission and work and some of the work that you have been doing at the organization.

>> Heather McGhee: I would be happy to. So Demos was founded in 2000 to be a think and do tank that would create policy ideas to address inequality in our democracy and our economy.

Also advocate at the state, local, and federal level for those ideas to be adopted into law.

And the organization is headquartered in New York. It as I said was founded in 2000, it is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that in our mission to address inequality in our democracy and our economy has addressed issues such as campaign finance reform, voting rights including most recently a Supreme Court case on the issue of states purging voters from the rolls.

Advancing ideas such as same day and voter registration at the state and local level, such as equity issues such as the growth of credit card debt among working and middle class families, the issue of medical debt and getting consumer protections and safeguards to protect borrowers. The issue of wages and workers' voice on the job as well as issues like childcare and student debt.

And I became President of Demos in the year 2014, taking over from a wonderful man who had been a public servant for many, many years, Miles Rappaport who succeeded the first president Steven Heinz, now the head of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which I sit on the board.

And I had been working at Demos for a number of years, almost ten years when I succeeded into the role of the presidency. So when I came in, I didn't want to make a lot of changes to the organization. I had been involved in it for a long time, but I had one big goal around transforming the organization when it came to issues of racial equity.

And I want to just touch on this for a moment. I'm sure that many of the people on this webinar are in positions in organizations, and if we look back at the poll there's really a range of how centrally racial equity is put in your organizations. For us, we were a progressive social justice policy advocacy organization that was dealing with issues which absolutely have racial disparities. Think of things like voting rights. Think of things like debt, bankruptcies, minimum wage. Yet we did not have an organizationally squint theory around why there were racial disparities. We didn't have an organizationally squint set of skills across our, at that point about 35 staff members for how to fluently talk about race, how to address racial conflicts, how to have a racial analysis of issues that we were working on.

So I set out with my then all-white executive team, the vice-presidents under me were all white at the time, to radically transform our organization when it comes to racial equity. Later on this month, Demos will be releasing a report that is really a step-by-step handbook about what we did. But I'll just say briefly we took a real soup to nuts approach. The most important thing that we did, and it is I think essential as a starting point for any organization that wants to undertake a

diversity, equity, and inclusion or whatever phrases you use to describe it. But some process to up your game on this central animating feature to society, which is racial inequality.

That is to understand and articulate why it is that racial equity is essential to the mission of your organization. And for us at Demos, we had to look back and say: Why do we have this inequality in our society? Why do we have a democracy where there are these vast inequities? And where it seems like so many of the laws are actually created in order to make it harder for people to vote, harder for people who are just ordinary people, working class people, people of color to run for office, to make their voices heard.

When you look back in the history, the reason why we have such poor and inefficient and discriminatory and suppressive laws around voting, each and every one of them goes back to the desire to control the voting power of the newly-freed slaves in the United States. And so not only is there an issue of racial disparity today, but the system which doesn't work well for anybody -- nobody of any race wants to vote on a Tuesday. Nobody of any race, you know, wants to have to be a millionaire in order to run for office. So that system doesn't work well for anybody, but its roots are in a racist desire to suppress the votes of people of color.

The same on the economic issues. We looked back at all of the laws that we were trying to change and we were able to find basically the fingerprints of that belief in a hierarchy of human value, an economic system in this country that has such a low floor because fundamentally at the beginning there was no floor. We were able to then see how much racism was at the heart of the problems that we were trying to address. And, therefore, recognize that addressing racism in society under each of the issues that we were working on and also being fluent and able to navigate racially complex issues within our organization on our teams within coalitions, in the politics that we were working with, was just mission critical. Once we understood it was mission critical, that it wasn't a nice to have, it was a must have, then we had the alignment and the enthusiasm to undertake the work that would be necessary. And we were able to do it with joy, which I think is an important piece of it as well. Because people really did feel on our staff like it was a gift that our society simply does not prepare people well with the truth of what is going on in our country in terms of racial inequality, our history and the current practices today. And it doesn't equip people of most races and ethnic backgrounds to work in diverse teams successfully and to deal with conflicts that come up around issues of race and cultural difference.

Giving your teammates that gift of that knowledge and those skills and competencies is very, very powerful and is something that transformed our organization and made us much more impactful and also, I would say, and have heard across the organization, transformed the lives of people who worked there.

>> Nadine Gracia: Heather, thank you for sharing that. Actually what you stated addressed some questions we have received from the audience. One, your transparency to say that you were leading in an all-white executive team. We have gotten questions from audience members about where there is not as much diversity within the organization, how you champion this kind of work and so talking about that transformative process.

Even for an organization like Demos, as you noted, which is focusing on social justice. That type of transformation is possible. We will certainly share the handbook that you are preparing, as many of our audience members will be interested in seeing that process and understanding the process that Demos went through.

I would say for both you, in addition to your organizational leadership, you are truly national leaders. You are catalyzing these conversations on race. Not only conversations, you are championing the efforts to advance racial equity. Gail, I know you are advising institutions and

leaders across the country. Heather, you are frequently appearing in national media and engaged in high profile consultations, notably, for example, advising Starbucks on conducting a company-wide training on racial bias after the April 2018 incident at the Philadelphia Starbucks. Can both of you share, what is your sense of the level of interest of leaders of organizations? Of companies in promoting racial equity and you know, what are they communicating that may be some of the opportunities and some of the challenges?

Especially in public health we also know we are in this era of public health 3.0 where we need to work across sectors, not solely in health. How can we reach the other sectors as well effectively as we think about eliminating health disparities but using the framework of racial equity as part of that mission?

>> Gail Christopher: At the start I really want to thank Heather for sharing how the alignment with the mission of the organization, the alignment with the goals and intention are showing that this work aligns with that is absolutely, I think, the cornerstone of being effective in bringing about any organizational change. We had that experience at the Kellogg Foundation. Our founders said do what you will with the money so long as it helps children. Most of the trends in America are children of color and a disproportionate number of growing up impoverished. The future focus needs to be focused on removing the barriers to equal opportunity and the opportunity for all children to thrive.

The other critical factor, I think, and this came from the network in the group of folks who worked with me over the years. If you lead with love, not animus, what really undergirds successful organizational commitment and transformation to this work is a genuine capacity to care about everybody in the room and everybody at the table to really lead with empathetic compassion and love. It sets a different tone for the work. I applaud the work, the steps that Starbucks took to own up to the situation there and to say we are going to use it to catapult us into a higher level of account interest. There are other companies that I'm working with who have faced crises, who are using that crisis to catapult themselves into a deeper capacity, into new skills. To launch philanthropic or charitable efforts. To say this is our work.

I think there is an appetite, but we can't be naive. We do have a moment in history. I believe the opportunity for healing is in the moment. You know, we do have a moment in history where fear is driving levels of division and levels of actual hatred that are unprecedented in my adult lifetime. So it makes us want to step away from this work. But I think more than we ever have had to before, we have to step into this work. We have to do it from a place not of animus and not of incivility. A place of engagement, engagement for ourselves and for future generations. I see that happening all over the country. I see it in universities. The concept of diversity, equity, inclusion, is a multibillion dollar industry. It is alive and well in the corporate sector. It started with compliance to the Civil Rights laws, reducing discrimination. And over the decades it has evolved to where equity is there. What is missing a little bit from that frame is the honesty about the centrality of the belief in a hierarchy of human value. So we have to bring that into those conversations. And there is, I think, an increasing desire to do that. I suggest to companies or organizations, you need to start by bringing people together, to create a trust and a relational dynamic that is grounded in respect for everybody at the table. I think that is sort of emotional empathetic affective domain work has to precede the more direct cognitive efforts. Because if you don't have the hearts there, trust me, the minds are going to go to their separate corners. You end up with defense and offense and a lot of tension.

You really want to start the work with clear intention and clear set of principles that asserts the value of everyone and the historic anti-discrimination work, the historic diversity and inclusion

work, it didn't start with that. It started with various methodologies that made people feel guilty and excluded.

We really have to learn from that history and find ways to step into this work more thoughtfully. I'll just say it sounds corny, but lead with love. That's how the work really happens well.

>> Heather McGhee: I think that was very well say. Maybe I'll just leave it there. I'm sure there are more questions on this topic.

>> Nadine Gracia: Okay. Heather, you had an inspiring experience on C-Span. Millions of people are familiar with the experience, but I think it's so powerful each and every time that you tell it.

Where a caller admitted on national television that he has prejudice. He stated in fact that he was hoping you could change his mind about some things. And through conversations with you and really taking some transformative steps you formed a genuine friendship. In his words a year later, he said he changed a lot.

Can you tell us more about that experience and what you both have learned? For our audience, to you and to Gail, they will be asking themselves: How does this experience translate to what I do each and every day in my work, in my organization, in my community?

>> Heather McGhee: Great, sure, I'm happy to.

So as part of my job I often go on the radio and trust fund and talk about issues affecting inequality in America. And I was on a program in August of 2016 on C-Span called Washington Journal, which is a live call-in show where you are sitting up there answering questions from the host. They sort of open it up to the public. And you just answer questions from people across the country.

C-Span actually has notoriously, often has racist ranting callers who call in and talk about conspiracy theories and, you know, they are just some cranky folks sitting there watching trust fund in the middle of the day. I sort of girded myself for this experience.

Halfway through the hour I received a call from a man whose first words were: I'm a white male and I am prejudiced. And I will say in that moment both the host and I sort of took a deep breath and I, you know, sort of steeled myself for what was to come.

He did go on an talk about his prejudice against particularly black men, this idea of fear of black men and what he reads on the news around gangs and crime and drugs.

Then he said: But I want to change. I'm wondering if you -- he was talking to me -- can tell me how I can change to become, in his words, a better American.

And again this is live television. So I was quite taken a back. But really moved. This was 2016. At this point I'm two years into the process I just described at Demos. So I have actually seen people transformed, learn and I just have grown up with my mother and the work that she has done over decades, to move people of all races into a place of healing and cross-racial understanding. So I'm an inveterate optimist on this issue. Although these days are trying that optimism, but we'll come back to that, I'm sure.

In the moment I responded with the first words which came to my mind which were: Thank you. Those are the first words I said in response. I said thank you for admitting a prejudice because it is so often we don't do that. We deny that prejudice exists. And doing so, admitting is the first step and it is the most powerful thing we can do.

I went on to, off the top of my head, give him some ideas about what he could do to integrate his life, get to know black families who are not at all like the stereotypes he referred to, read about. to read about African American history, join an interracial church and foster those relationships in his community.

So the way the program goes, I answered his question and we moved to the next questioner. But the clip of that exchange got on Facebook and over the next few days went viral and had over 1 million hits.

Garry, his name was, Garry from North Carolina, ended up finding me on Twitter. He got on Twitter on the first time to look me up. His first tweet was: How does this thing work? (Chuckles.)

>> Heather McGhee: He was able to find me. He contacted me and we started a series of phone conversations because I wanted to know, you know, how my answer resonated with him. And in his words, he said it was like I had cleared dust from a window and let the light in. And I think really just invited him to do what he was already on a path to doing, which was to change his life.

That was now two years ago. Garry and I have met in person half a dozen times. He has become, in his small town and in his small way, a real model of the kind of transformation that we can all have, rejecting the fear, rejecting the noise that he credits cable television for distorting his views of what our other Americans are, both news and reality trust fund shows. And he has become an avid reader of African American history. He joined an interracial church. What I would say about what lessons that little strange moment that happened in my life, the strange friendship that ensued, has for all of us is first of all there's a hunger in this country to talk about race, to hear a story like that. That video and the subsequent video that we made when I first met Garry has now been viewed over 20 million times. And it is something that surprises people, both that this white man on the phone was able to admit on national television that he was prejudiced; and that a black woman responded without anger. That would be the stereotype, but rather with empathy and consideration. And I say that the other reason why that sort of resonates for people, I told him there was a way out. And so often because racism has been the central operating feature of our society for so long, it feels like we are retrenching and inequalities are growing even after the Civil Rights movement and even after the first African American President. It is possible. I said there were simple things that he could do to change his life and overcome his fears and biases.

I'll end just by saying that one of the questions was: How do you do this work in an organization that is not diverse? I strongly believe that we do ourselves a disservice when we pretend that addressing racism is only or even primarily for the benefit of people of color. The creation of this belief of racial hierarchy was something that fundamentally distorted not just the life experiences of people of color, but white people as well. And I do believe that like Garry, there is in millions of white people, particularly those who are working in organizations are trying to help people who have a latent desire, yet there are barriers, roadblocks and signs of white fragility. There is a book by Robin DiAngelo, or an article summarizing the book, on the concept of white fragility, which is extremely important in this work.

But fundamentally the people who benefited the most from the transformation work at Demos were the white people on our staff. It is freeing. It is liberating. I am working on a book right now about the costs of racism, not just to people of color but to white people and to our overall society. And it could be a thousand-page book because there are so many ways in which racism actually isn't a benefit to white people. It is something that has psychological costs, economic costs, that impoverishes our society and everything that we hold in common because of this belief that some people are not worthy of the benefits of our society.

So we really have got to recognize that white people can be champions for racial equity. They can be the protagonists in the story of transformation in organizations. You don't have to wait

until your organization becomes more diverse, but you do have to understand the ways that white -- the consciousness of growing up as a white person in a white dominant society is a very specific thing. And so you need to really formulate your transformation efforts in ways that are attuned to the traps and to the expect ways that white people have formed consciousness so often in a society that places them on top.

>> Nadine Gracia: Thank you, Heather, for that. We are seeing our audience is also appreciating the resources that both of you are sharing as far as books or articles to read or other web, online resources that are available. We appreciate you mentioning those. And I think what you have also highlighted is just the makeup of an organization is how you do that transformation, regardless of the organization. Because you are again noting the centrality of advancing racial equity, the role that each of us has to play and how, I think, which is a common misunderstanding, that this is solely about addressing the needs for people of color; but this actually truly is addressing the needs for all of us as a society. That is really an important lesson. We have heard from our audience members in other webinars as well that even using the terms racism and equity can be challenging. That how do you approach, for example, someone in a hospital or an elected official or organizations where you get a sense that by doing so you may close the door to a conversation. That changing of the narrative, so that everyone can see that they can address this and that it is for the benefit of the organization and the work that they do. Is there advice you would give? How do you get started? How do you do this in your organization especially if you are not in a leadership role as well, to be able to advance that priority?

>> Gail Christopher: I appreciate that question and I want to as a proud mother thank Heather for the spirit she brought in response to Garry's question. It was really quite moving. I found that this container of this belief, this false ideology -- there's a wonderful book called "Born To Believe" which documents the neuroscience behind the power of our beliefs. It is one thing to have a thought. It is another thing to have beliefs that are entrenched and embedded and they drive our behaviors.

I found that focusing the discussion initially around this notion that there is this ideology of a belief and a hierarchy of human value, it doesn't run people away. There's a wonderful book called "Stamped From the Beginning." The author's last name is Kinde, a National Book Award-winning book that came out in 2017. It documents the history of these ideas, this idea. I think people need to understand that that is really what we are dealing with. We are dealing with an idea, a set of beliefs that actually have shaped behaviors and decision, which actually shapes institutions and structures.

That's one way of bringing people to the table. I think the notion of diversity, equity, and inclusion, that tends to bring people in a little more easily, although our indigenous ancestors and our indigenous participants have reminded us that the inclusion notion is really a notion of hierarchy. It is mine and I'm going to include you in it.

They encourage us to think more are in terms of an expansive view of humanity, a circle that engages all people. So this idea of expanding our circles of understanding and compassion, that is another frame that I think brings people to the table. Many people of color will resist this work because they don't want to feel that they are responsible for making other people okay. You know? So it is important to make sure that however the work is done, it is done and it affirms the value and the experience of all people engaged, so that nobody feels they are carrying the burden of someone else's experience: Guilt, shame, projected anything, right?

The last thing I would say on that is the concept of unconscious bias has gained a lot of resonance. We did a lot to support and fund the promotion of that concept. I encourage people to take the implicit association test. To be biased is not to be racist necessarily. To be biased is to be human. We as human beings, we categorize things in order to remember them. So we have naturally developed this penchant for categorizing groups.

But those biases, if we are in leadership positions, if we have authority, those biases can cause us to bring about inequity in the distribution of resources, human resources, financial resources, et cetera.

The concept of unconscious bias is also one that doesn't run everybody out of the room. It engages people. But we are in a strange moment in American history where it is not unconscious bias. You know, they talked about dog whistle politics years ago. It is now bull horn politics in the sense that we are dealing with overt assertions of hierarchy, of value and supremacy. And so I really encourage people to read the book "Rising Out of Hatred" which is another story of two generations, not unlike Heather and myself. It is the story of a father and a son, a son who was being groomed to be a leader in an extremist movement who came to the understanding that that ideology is wrong.

It is a brand new book. The author is Eric Saslow. It is a powerful story of personal transformation away from the false ideology of the hierarchy of human value.

I would say that finding language initially that speaks to the challenge but doesn't necessarily say -- I don't ever really talk about race. I do talk about the belief in the hierarchy of human value which is racism and anti-Semitism and anti-sexism and anti-Islamic, and that is all based on this notion of hierarchy of human value.

What do we replace with? With the truth that we are all descendants of essentially one human family. That we trace our ultimate genetic ancestry, our DNA back to a woman in Africa, we all do. This notion of dividing humanity up, it has no place in the 21st century.

The work of racial healing is the work of reconnecting and reaffirming our, I'll use the term sacred interconnectedness as a fume family. That brings people in. Today we have people from faith communes, leadership from education communities. There is a strong, expanding pulse for this kind of affirming and belonging approach and I think we don't have to be afraid of it. We have to understand that, as Heather said, the fact that 20 million people have viewed this video, it speaks to the innate goodness and hunger for this healing.

>> Nadine Gracia: Gail, thank you for so beautifully walking us through the history. History actually is so critical for us to be able to understand how we really overcome these divisions. As you noted, we are seeing whether historically or in contemporary society. For those of you, we have been referring back to this video. If you have not seen this video where Heather received the call from Garry, we really encourage you to do so. The empathy that she had, the compassion and kindness that she showed, you can see the transformation and what has happened subsequently.

We encourage you to watch that video.

I'm going to say that we are going to at this time transition to some audience question and answers. Questions, I should say. We have been answering some of the questions already that our audience members have been sending in, which we appreciate. We will try to get to as many of these as possible in our time remaining today.

So one of the questions that we received is: How do you actually, you know, within your organization, for example, actually measure or evaluate change? We've talked about making racial equity part of, having mission alignment with the issue of racial equity, we've talked about

awareness and cutting across the strategy and priorities of an organization. How do you then measure or evaluate change within an organization?

>> Heather McGhee: So I'll take that to start. So I think it is important, and the report that we are releasing I think is actually December 1st, so a month from now. We'll go through our steps. Of course, our process wasn't perfect, but it was ambitious and we felt that we didn't have a guide book or a handbook to help us. So we wanted to offer our experience to help people think about the ways that they should do it.

The first step, as I said, was creating the justification and the rationale. And we did that for our mission overall as an organization. Then we asked each of the teams in our organization why is racial equity central to what you do? Why is it essential for what you do as a research team, advocacy team or even as a finance team? That is the first step, the why, to get people aligned and excited and understanding its importance.

The second step is an assessment. And there we did a series of tools. We did an all-staff and board survey. We did focus groups. Conversations with a number of different staff and some of our partners in the field. And then from that we found -- some of them were asking people to rate experiences in the organization on the scale of one to ten. Some of them were more qualitative. From that we found the places where we wanted to intervene. What was our baseline assessment that we had? High levels of interest and excitement about a transformation, high levels of intellectual understanding. Not surprising for a think tank of racial issues in society, but low levels of, you know, personal competency in navigating issues across race, things like that. Conflict aversion which made it hard for people to be honest, to give people feedback, have direct communication.

We decided these are the four issues that we are going to target. We made those into competencies that we asked and then later demanded of our staff to develop over a course of time. And there were four competencies around racial equity analysis, around direct communication, around the ability to build authentic relationships across race, and then self awareness of your own group identity and power dynamics.

So we just said these are the things that we are going to value. And we are going to bake these into our evaluations, into our job descriptions. We are going to do professional development modules for each of these, which involved some individual coaching, which involved group sessions, et cetera.

And then because you set targets for what -- again, these are, of course, about personal development, right? They are not facts and figures, but they are the stuff of teams. They are the stuff of the work. You know, our people are our work.

Then we were able to evaluate each staff member. We had in the organization some goals in terms of how diverse we wanted to be. In the end we went from 23 percent people of color in 2014 to 60 percent people of color when I stepped down as President earlier this year.

We had overhauled our hiring. And then, of course, they are doing right now another round of assessment. So basically, the quickest answer is take a survey at the beginning and at the end. But I would say that you have to know which questions you want to ask. We wanted to know, did our partners see us differently? Did we have different partners? Did we choose to do different work in different communities because of this racial equity analysis?

There are so many ways that we implicitly measured ourselves and then the explicit racial equity competencies that we asked our staff members to exhibit really did shape our work and transformed the way we were able to have an impact in the world.

>> Gail Christopher: Heather, I think that's a brilliant strategy. I would only add to that that there are certain validated instruments out there that can be used for organizational assessment going in, especially in a diverse organization. The IDI or the Intercultural Development Inventory is a wonderful psychological tool, assessment tool that can be done organization-wide and with divisions or departments within an organization as well as individuals. It doesn't explicitly say racism, but it talks about intercultural development. The development is key here. As Heather's comments implied, this is a journey. We are all on it. Building the developmental frame, the opportunities for growth and education and development into your performance review and your staff assessment processes, it is a very important part of the change. Social network mapping is another tool that I think lends itself nicely to the assessment of progress because we live in very separate, almost enclaves. We end to work in them. If you can assess social networks at the beginning and see how they change over time, it is a good indication of how successful you have been in developing these new and meaningful relationships. Meaningful personally and meaningful in terms of the work. Then finally, an instrument that people can take individually and know, which is the Harvard Prepared Implicit Association Test. It is something that we encourage everybody that gets into this work to begin to explore their own biases and their adaptations of that. These are validated instruments that organizations and individuals can use. This field is growing rapidly now. So their equity impact assessment tools and racial equity impact tools are emerging. Don't be afraid to do the work in the sense that there is fear that you can't measure the progress. We can measure the progress. The work is relational as well as cognitive. We want to use tools that actually measure relational change.

>> Nadine Gracia: I am just in awe of both of you and these resources that you are sharing. I think our audience members are really enjoying getting these tangible types of concrete resources that can be used in your every day work. This is really the benefit of having your expertise here.

Another question that we have from our audience which has come up a few times in previous webinars. I think it would be very helpful to get your perspective, especially as it relates to racial equity. What is the best way to start a dialogue about health equity, disparities in health equity in diverse communities? There is a sense of resistance, how do you start that in a more conservative environment?

>> Gail Christopher: I'll step in and certainly invite Heather to step in as well.

The business case in a more conservative environment particularly when it is being led by people of means and wealth, the actual numbers, the economic incentives can be a powerful tool for opening the discussion. The economic case, the business case gets people's attention because it translates the conversation into one that is grounded in self interest. If the conservative trend is coming from a religious perspective, some of the faith groups that are leading this work tie it back to fundamental religious doctrine of caring and reaching out and helping. Sometimes, it depends on what we mean by conservative. So I think that the economic and business case is one way to start the conversation. If it is a religious conservatism, it can be based on the tenets of whatever the religion is that has to do with hope and care and love. That's another way to bring people in. And I think children. Children are a universal -- they soften us emotionally. I have the privilege of becoming a grandmother. I cannot capture in words how transcendent that experience has been for me in terms of something magical about the beauty and power of love and of life continuing through our children.

So I have found that people are willing to come into this discussion when you frame it in terms of the benefit of the children, their own and others, I think those are three ways of starting the conversation.

But I would go back and say that it is not a dialogue. Don't start it as a conversation or a dialogue. Start it as an engagement experience, where people are coming together. We can certainly, if you visit my website, the Ntianu Center. Dr. Gail Christopher is the name of the website, but the email is the Ntianucenter.com. We can put you in touch with practitioners who will be able to co-facilitate and lead your organizations through circles of engagement on this work.

I think that's where you need to start. If you try to start it as a cognitive and theoretical approach, we all have our blinders. We all have our beliefs that we really are holding on to. And you run into resistance. I just want to emphasize the effective part and say it is not a conversation about race. It is not a dialogue about race. It is an engagement experience about the value of our common humanity and our collective humanity. And moving into that. I think that brings people to the table on either side of the spectrum.

>> Nadine Gracia: I am going to take another question before we move to closing. And that is, how do we help a significant part of the population -- this is from the audience member's perspective -- who do not believe that racism exists? And help in understanding its impact and actually to join and participate in advancing racial equity?

>> Gail Christopher: Heather, you want to respond to that?
Go ahead.

>> Heather McGhee: I'm sorry, I just muted myself because there was a barking dog. Speaking of barking dogs, this is a moment in which the number of people who believe that is lower than it has been in a very long time. There are some Pew polls that show people believe racism is real and higher than the rates shown at the beginning of the Civil Rights movement. That doesn't mean that there aren't people who have a vested interest in denying that racism is real. I recommend "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo. I couldn't recommend this book more highly for dealing with the mental barriers that so many, particularly white people have created. But this is something that is not exclusive to white people. White fragility is not just something that people with white skin have. It is people who have adopted a white consciousness in society.

Because ultimately the investment in denying that this unfairness exists is really about self-protection. Because if life is unfair and I as a white person am a supposed beneficiary of an unequal system, what does that say about me? Everyone wants to be the hero in their own story. And it is really hard to face up to the degree of racism in our society and still feel like you are part of the good guy team. And that first kind of resistance to fully sort of interrogating your potential role in an unfair society is where many people stop because it is just too much. And people feel like they are being personally blamed for things that they did not do. And all of those are very sort of typical resistance responses that Robert DiAngelo does of identifying and identifying somewhat some of the ways to get around them are. I think it's important to be ready for them, to be prepared for them.

I would just say that one of the justifications, you can look at the shooting of an unarmed black person by a police officer and say well, they did X. You can look at disparities in education and say well, it is the black families around parents' faults or the immigrant children are just not learning English quickly enough. There are different sort of justifications for disparities. But particularly within a public health context, it is so critical to ground these efforts in what is the

outcome we want to see? What is my stake in it as a participant in this system? Whether I'm an administrator or social worker, a physician, a care provider, I have a stake in the success of this system. What are the obstacles to success in the system? There are so many statistics that show that racism is a core barrier to health and wellbeing. Not just for people of color, but also I would argue and I'm arguing in the book that I'm working on now, it impoverishes the system all together.

Take Flint, right? We see that as an issue of environmental injustice, where the mostly white state policymakers made decisions that imperiled the health of mostly black children in the town of Flint. Of course, there are white families in the town of Flint as well. Of course, the very idea that a public good like water could be degraded and cheapened if it is going to people who are lower on the hierarchy of value, that is something that is dangerous for all of our children. It is a dangerous idea that we should not keep our water systems to the highest possible standards. And I think being able to make the case that the system is not working for us as a whole and that it is putting unnecessary risks to all of us because of the ways that the systems are allowed to work poorly or punitively for people that the dominant group believes is less than, is an important part of engaging people who may be resistant to the idea of interpersonal racism, may be resistant to the idea of racism in the criminal justice system or the healthcare system, but ultimately those barriers to accepting that are often really grounded in the desire to be a good guy. Or a good person. That's where you have to start and recognize that these barriers are constructed for a reason. You can get at the heart level and invite someone to cross that bridge into being a champion for racial equity. And recognize that people all want to be the hero in their own story.

>> Nadine Gracia: We could continue this conversation, I know, for many, many hours. This has been such a wonderful conversation. I want to reflect back to the audience, we've gotten so many questions and comments, just of audience members thanking you, Gail and Heather, for your wisdom, for your insight, for the affirmation of work that they are doing and really the inspiration to keep doing this work. So I want to thank you all.

Unfortunately, we will have to move to our closing. It has been truly an inspirational conversation and discussion. As we are closing and leading into that close, we are going to bring up our final poll question, which is: After today's webinar I feel more knowledgeable about talking about and promoting racial equity.

As you complete that poll question, I just want to say that at this time on behalf of Trust For America's Health, I want to thank our audience members really for going on this journey with us through this health equity web series on Taking Action to Promote Health Equity. We heard the perspectives from leaders of community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, to philanthropy and government agencies, academic institutions and advocacy and policy organizations. And together we have really discussed some thought provoking questions and addressed challenging issues. We thought outside of the box for innovative strategies and have reaffirmed or now committed ourselves to advancing health equity in our respective work and sectors. This is an important mission of achieving health equity for the nation. It's one that everyone has a role to play and in which if we work together and do this together we can really strive to fulfill our nation's promise.

So we at Trust For America's Health certainly look forward to continuing this journey with all of you.

I want to thank you for participating and for joining us in this webinar. I want to thank our incredible panelists, Dr. Gail Christopher and Heather McGhee. I want to thank our cosponsors,

California Endowment, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Dialogue4Health staff in working behind the scenes in helping us to host this web forum. This has been Creating Change Through Leadership: Two Extraordinary Leaders, a Mother and Daughter, Share Their Experiences Promoting Racial Equity, the final webinar in our series in Taking Action to Promote Health Equity. You can download a recording of today's web forum as well as the other three in the series and other materials online at TFAH.org or the Dialogue4Health.org website.

Thank you again for tuning in. And this concludes today's web forum.

(The web forum concluded at 3:05 p.m. EDT.)