



In this special [three-part series](#) on diversity, See3 sat down with Joy Bailey and Derrick Dawson, the co-program coordinators at [Chicago Regional Organization for Antiracism \(ROAR\)](#) to understand how the social good industry could become more inclusive and more representative of our changing population.

Any institution can create a statement about its commitment to change; however, the real truth comes with the resources, actions, practices and procedures that it develops to shift the organizational culture.

According to “[The Voice of Nonprofit Talent](#)” report by the Common Good Careers, among the employees who believe their employers value diversity, only 25% believe that their organization has actively demonstrated their commitment to creating a racially diverse environment.

In our series, we addressed how racism is baked into institutions, and if we’re going to affect change in the social good community, we have to be mindful of the common pitfalls that make inclusion even more challenging.

Even though research suggests the [benefits of diversity](#), why are so many organizations still slow to change? How then, moving forward, can institutions actually affect change? Is there a three-step process? Is there a blueprint that we can follow to get on the right page of history?

As we conclude our discussion on anti-racism and anti-oppression, Chicago ROAR’s Joy Bailey and Derrick Dawson tell us what makes an institution diverse and how healing is a necessary part of the process to sustainable change.

What makes a diverse institution?

According to Dawson, Chicago ROAR's belief is that diversity means different types of educational and racial background, sexuality, perspectives, ways of doing things, and histories. It can also mean diversity in the way institutions conduct business.

"Perhaps diversity means looking at people we haven't used before that have different learning styles and communications styles," Dawson suggests.

According to the [Center for American Progress](#), there are also positive economic implications to giving diversity more than a passing glance. For institutions that are more diverse, there can be a:

1. Drive in economic growth.
2. Greater share of target audience
3. Qualified, healthy workforce
4. Decrease in turnover costs for HR
5. Creative and innovative environment

Make sure diverse voices are heard.

Once your institution has a diverse staff, the hard work begins because you have to make sure that all those perspectives are being paid attention to, listened to, and actually encouraged to participate in the operation of the organization.

"Often we hire people because they have diverse backgrounds and then do all kinds of unintentional things to keep them out of full participation in the organization and then we don't have these perspectives," Dawson says.

Choosing words wisely.

When institutions have a shared understanding of the problem, only then can the solution be crafted. Crossroads uses the principle ***Diagnosis Determines Treatment (DDT)*** to begin its work with building strategies for anti-racist institutions.

"We have to have a shared diagnosis, an accurate diagnosis, an in-depth diagnosis before we jump to the treatment. And so using some accurate language and then explaining what we mean by it and making sure everyone has some shared understanding is a very first step, and an ongoing step, in the process," Bailey says.

Crossroads uses words like "anti-racist" and "anti-oppressive" because it believes it is important to name what's not working.

"Some people don't like the anti part because it sounds negative, but we also think that just as in you would use antidepressants or antibiotics, that it's a way to intervene in this structural problem. It's healing the damage that has been done; but it can also be preventative," says Bailey.

Change takes courage.

Taking a stand for diversity can be perceived as rocking the boat or disrupting culture. For organizations that choose to face it head on, they will have to admit that racism is real and then search for ways to put some peace behind their language and desire to address it.

"My dream is that more institutions not be afraid of actually addressing racism and just being bold enough to say 'we want to be an anti-racist institution,' 'because usually that's what they mean. But there's so much fear and trepidation around the topic, that there brings, and the reason they use things like diversity, equity and inclusion is because they are the buzzwords and it makes sense to do that," Dawson remarks. "But there's real fear about diving into what that means. And we know why."

No one wants to be labeled as racist.

Another misconception about racism is that it's just a question of things between African American and White people.

However, the conversation about racism is mainly about white discrimination.

According to Dawson, some people believe that African Americans are really the victims and other people of color are not involved in the conversation, often leading to statements like "If white folk will just get things straight, then this won't be a problem. 'This doesn't involve me.'"

Bailey includes that racism is more than just an individualistic thing. "Yes, it does impact us all as individuals and we internalize stuff; we live it out, and we need to do our individual work. But racism is so much more than just how it impacts us as individuals; it impacts our institutions and our culture, and it's a systemic problem, and so often our work is to help organizations move from a purely individual perspective to a more systemic perspective."

Change takes time.

Undoing years of racial bias has no quick solution because it is not an idea that was put in place

"When people want the quick answers, or the ten things to do, or the 'Let's just skip part of these steps and get right to the action,' ... you are just going to reproduce what you're intending to undo," Bailey warns.

In fact, in their work with institutions, Chicago ROAR notes that sometimes progress means taking two steps forward, three steps back, and this is further challenged when new people come on board.

"We partner with anybody that wants to do this work. It really is a relationship in how do we get more and more organizations to do this work and to collaborate with each other, then we're going to see not only cultural transformation of the individual institutions but of the community and the city," Bailey says.

What you can do now.

For institutional leaders that want to get a jump start on learning more, Bailey suggests beginning to understand the histories and experiences of all the different racialized groups, including African Americans, Latino, American Indian, Arab Americans, Asian Americans and Caucasians.

In addition to [resources](#) on its website, Chicago ROAR recommends two books worth reading: Howard Zinn's "[A People's History of the United States](#)" and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's "[An Indigenous People's History of the United States](#)."

Furthermore, PBS's series "[Race, The Power of an Illusion](#)" and the blog [Colorlines](#) break down race in the United States and race construct in a very helpful way.

"If we start to learn more and how racism has affected all of these groups, we get a clearer picture of what racism is. If we're only looking at a couple different groups, then it's too narrow," she mentions. "If we're going to really try to eliminate white supremacy then we've got to understand all the different parts of it."

If your organization wants to begin the process of being more inclusive, Chicago ROAR is ready to [have a conversation](#).

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