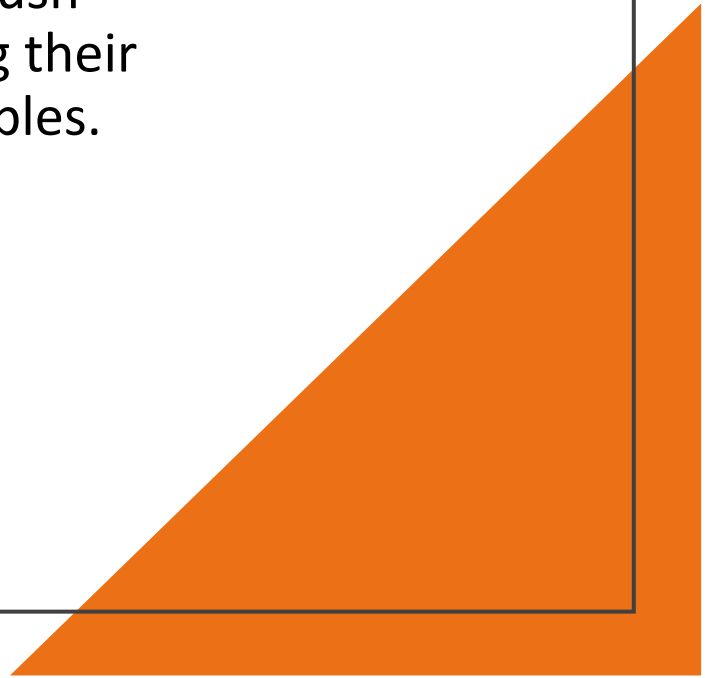# Journeying to Advance Equity in San Mateo County

Shireen Malekafzali (she/her) | Chief Equity Officer

Acknowledging the land our County sits on. Land of the Ramaytush Ohlone People

We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the Ancestors, Elders, and Relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.

Forum Overview

Equity Framework

- Defining equity
- Building equity foundations
- Early equity efforts

Q/A

County Foundational Framework and Approach

Bringing our heads and our hearts to this work.

Defining Equity

Equity is the goal of *just and fair inclusion* into a society in which *all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential*.

- PolicyLink

To achieve equity, we must *create the conditions* that allow all to reach their full potential.

Equity versus Equality

Different Needs = Different Resources

Different Barriers

Journey to Justice: Remove barriers and level the playing field

EQUALITY

EQUITY

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion - Belonging

**Diversity:** a fact –people being different from one another.

Equity: a goal–where everyone can reach their full potential.

Inclusion: a practice –to make space for people and ensure people are included

Belonging: a sense of authentic participation and power in the design or development - to not just be included in other people's spaces but to be a welcomed agent in the creation of the space with equitable distribution of power

Belonging versus Inclusion

- We recognize that our systems are inequitable
- Inclusion welcomes people into existing structures without questioning whether people feel like the structures are supportive or whether they feel they belong
- Building systems that are truly welcoming to all requires co-creation of systems

By: Krys – Belonging: A conversation about Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
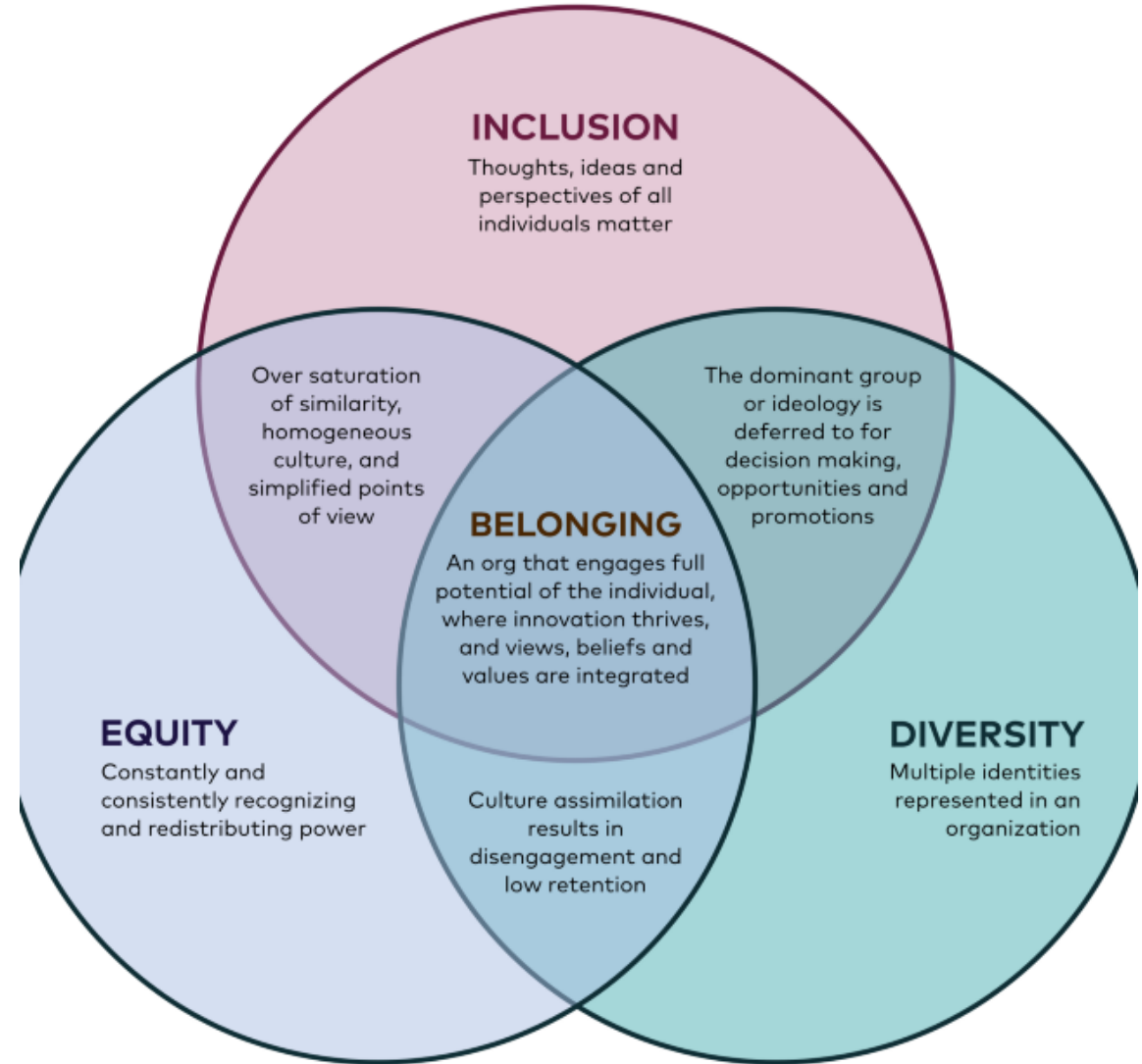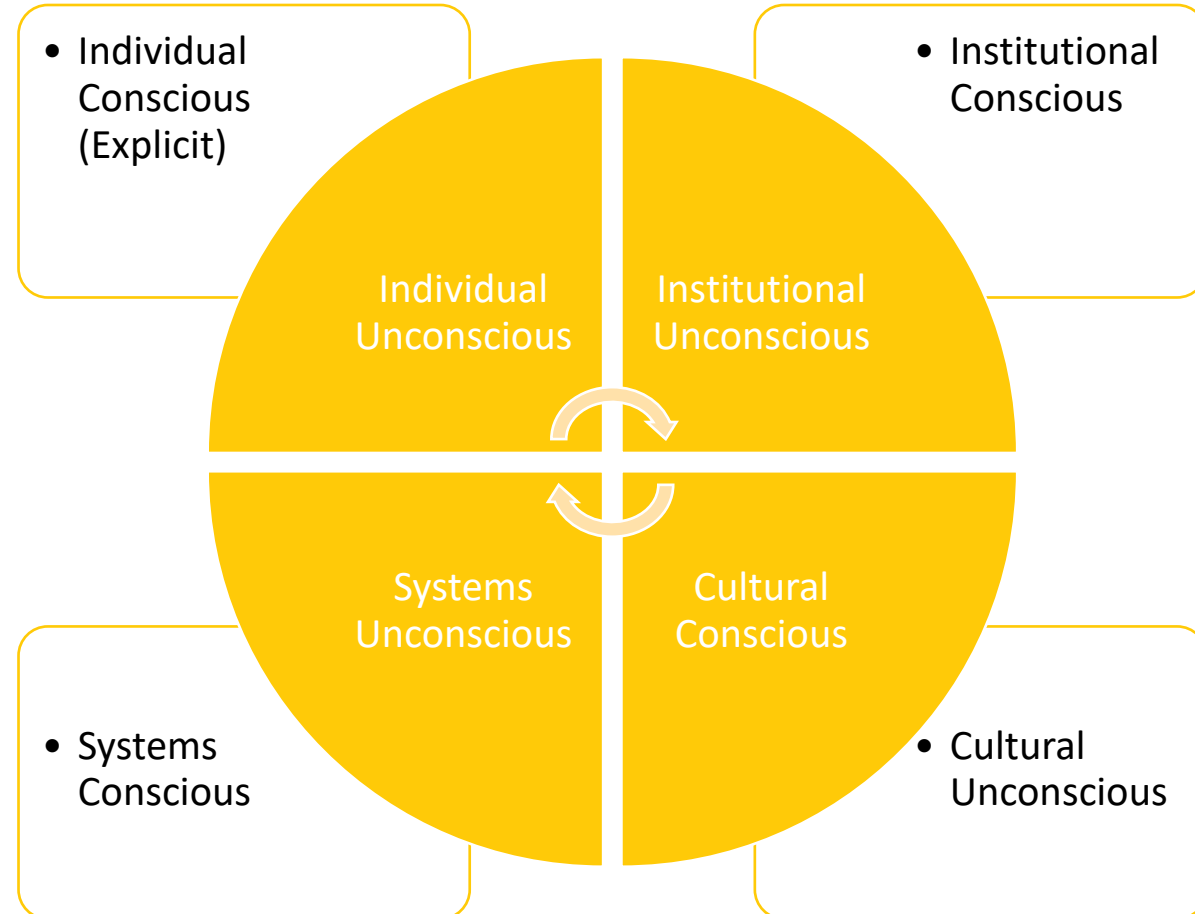
Narrative: Who Belongs and Who Doesn't

- **At least 64% People of Color**
  - Approximately 67% People of Color per Dr. Benner (UC Santa Cruz)
- **Large Immigrant Community**
  - 35% foreign born. 21% of immigrant population undocumented.
  - 46% speak another language at home
  - 57% of children have immigrant parents
- Approximately 30,000 residents are **LGBTQ+**
- **People with disabilities:** 4.3% 65 and under; 29.3% of 65+

Root Causes of Inequities: Oppression

- White Supremacy
- Patriarchy
- Colonialism
- Transphobia
- Heterosexism
- Cisgendersim or Cisnormaty
- Ableism
- Ageism
- Nativism
- Anti-Blackness
- Classism
- Racism
- Sexism
- Nueronormative

- Individual Conscious (Explicit)

- Institutional Conscious

Individual Unconscious

Institutional Unconscious

Systems Unconscious

Cultural Conscious

- Systems Conscious

- Cultural Unconscious

Root Causes of Inequities: Discriminatory Policies and Practices

- Slavery
- Indigenous Genocide
- Racial property deed restrictions
- Home loan discrimination (redlining)
- Urban renewal
- Exclusion from the GI Bill Benefits
- Deindustrialization
- Housing discrimination
- Employment Discrimination
- School segregation
- Residential segregation
- Funding disparities
- Structural poverty

- Incarceration inequities
- Implicit bias
- Zero tolerance disciplinary policies
- Predatory lending
- Loan discrimination
- Residential segregation
- Housing and employment discrimination
- Complaint-based systems
- Voter suppression
- Limited pipelines into leadership
- Voter Suppression
- Internment camps

Leading explicitly with race but not exclusive about race

- Leading with race but not exclusively focused on race – intersectionality is critical

- Racism and White Supremacy are embedded into the founding of the United States and were built into structures and systems of operation

- Race is a key determinant in the majority of life outcomes

- Racism runs deep within other forms of oppression – patriarchy and sexism, heteronormaty, ageism, ableism, transphobia, classism and more

Community Assets Run Deep & Wide

- Deep social capital
- Ownership of the community
- Community leadership
- Activism
- Family connections
- Power from the people
- Recognition of our fates being tied together
- Diversity of rich ancestral knowledge
- Resilience
- Culture and Art
- History
- Community Organizing - Organizers

This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND

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Approaches to bring to our equity work

Structural Transformation

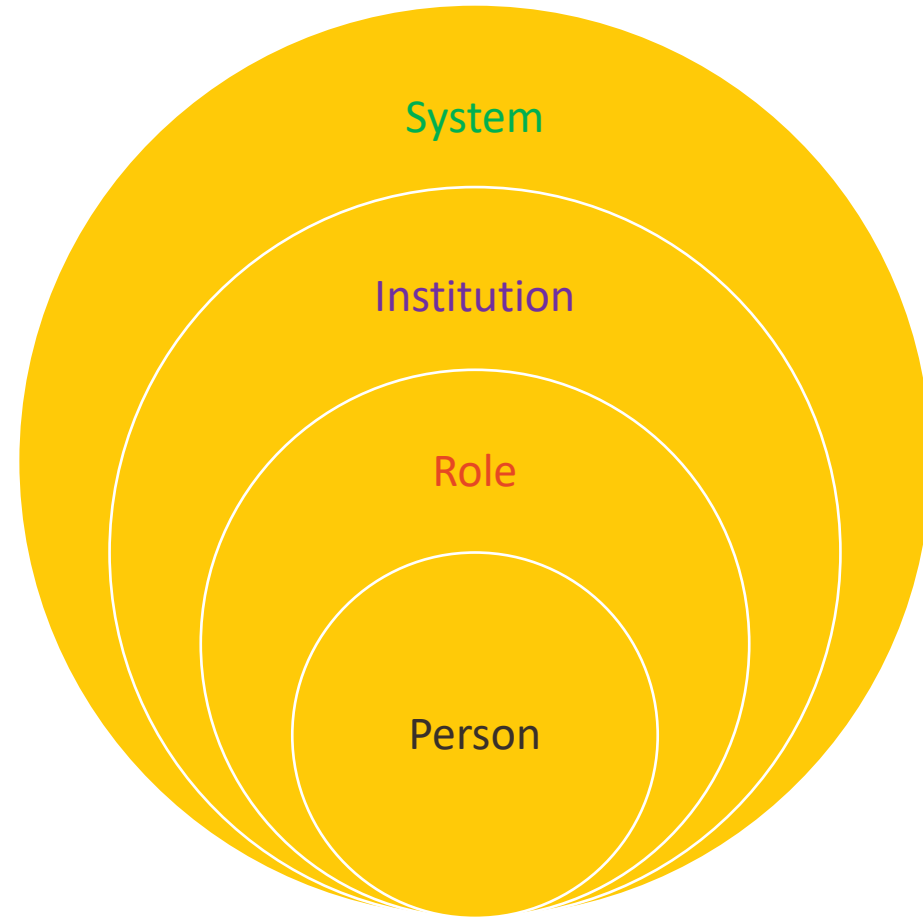Centering the Heart

Racial Justice

Authentic Democracy

Partnership

Emergent Practice

Organizational & Personal Journey

System

Institution

Role

Person

Building Infrastructure

Theory of Change to Achieving Equity

Input: County Transformation
County of San Mateo brings an equity lens into all it's operations and transforms its systems with explicit intention to advance equity.

How: Normalize, Organize, Operationalize, Accountability

External Influences:
- Community advocacy and expertise
- Resource requirements
- State and Federal laws
- City expertise

which change how the community influences this cycle

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT WITHIN THE COUNTY

Equitable Culture

Equitable Resource Allocation

Equitable Policies

Equitable Service Provision

Equitable Processes

Equitable Democracy

which help achieve equitable outcomes in key priority areas

which individually *and* collectively support

Community Outcomes
Shift in narrative and sense of belonging in SMC.

Other jurisdictions and organizations also commit to equity.

All have power and space to share their aspirations and needs.
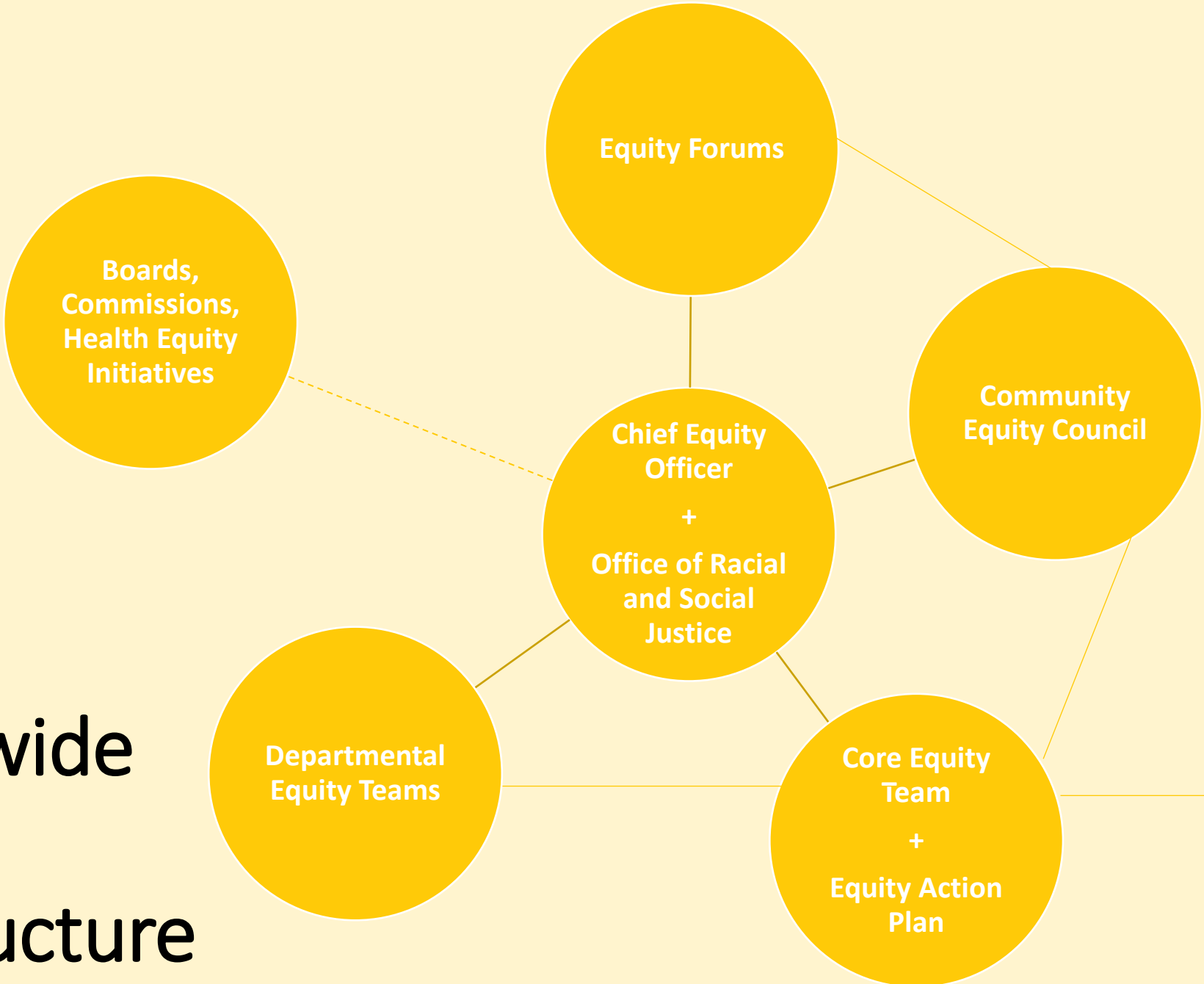
EQUITY

People experience the conditions they need to reach their full potential

Disparities by race, income, and other characteristics are eliminated.

Chief Equity Officer

Purpose: Support and engage San Mateo County to build and drive more equitable and accountable systems, in order to produce more equitable outcomes for our communities.

Countywide Equity Infrastructure

Equity Forums

Boards, Commissions, Health Equity Initiatives

Chief Equity Officer + Office of Racial and Social Justice

Community Equity Council

Departmental Equity Teams

Core Equity Team + Equity Action Plan

Committees:
Policy
Capacity Building
Data
Staff Wellbeing
Tools
Performance Planning

Initial Projects

- Purpose of Chief Equity Officer
- Theory of change
- Equity Framework
- Outreach to community for feedback
  - Community Equity Forums
  - Commission and community presentations
- Racial Equity Resolution (Canepa/Slocum)
- Build interdepartmental team – Countywide Core Equity Team
- Recovery Community Input – Federal-funding prioritization
- Baseline Data: All staff survey
- Anchor Institution Framework with inclusive hiring, promotion, retention, procurement and investment (Slocum/Groom)
- Develop Racial and Social Equity Action Plan

Project continued

- Develop Racial and Social Equity Action Plan
  - Inventory of existing equity-focused data
  - Staff training series on equity
  - Employee resource groups based on affinity
  - Equity-focused community engagement tool and/or training
  - Racial and social equity impact tool
  - Performance equity program focused on results-based accountability
  - Inclusive staffing & procurement
- Equity in Art Series – through the lens of communities of color
- Pronoun policy (Canepa/Pine) with LGBTQ+ Commission
- Community equity committee
- Office of Racial and Social Justice Office

What's Required?

Key ingredients towards success

1. **Strong, committed, resilient, and steady leadership**
   - Change requires taking risks, providing clear direction, and staying the course
   - Our feelings will be hurt, we will be challenged, we will learn and not shy away

2. **Clear vision and values of equity**
   - A collective vision and clarity of purpose ensures continued direction

3. **Strong, trusted, and engaged partnerships**
   - Those closest to the impact and work are necessary co-designers and partners

4. **Organizational transformation**
   - Intentional and focused change is needed across the organization

5. **Time**
   - Transformation and culture shift takes time so it can be sustainable – but there is an urgency to this work that must be recognized

6. **Accountability**
   - A clear plan, performance metrics, and stakeholder engagement

Transformation is necessary

"Instead of holding back we must have the courage to step forward, take our bureaucratic structures down to the studs and rebuild them through the lens of racial and social equity."

- Marc Ott, Executive Director of Institute for International City/County Management Association (ICMA). December 2020, from forward to "Governing for Equity: Implementing an Equity Lens in Local Government"

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND SECURITY OF PERSON.
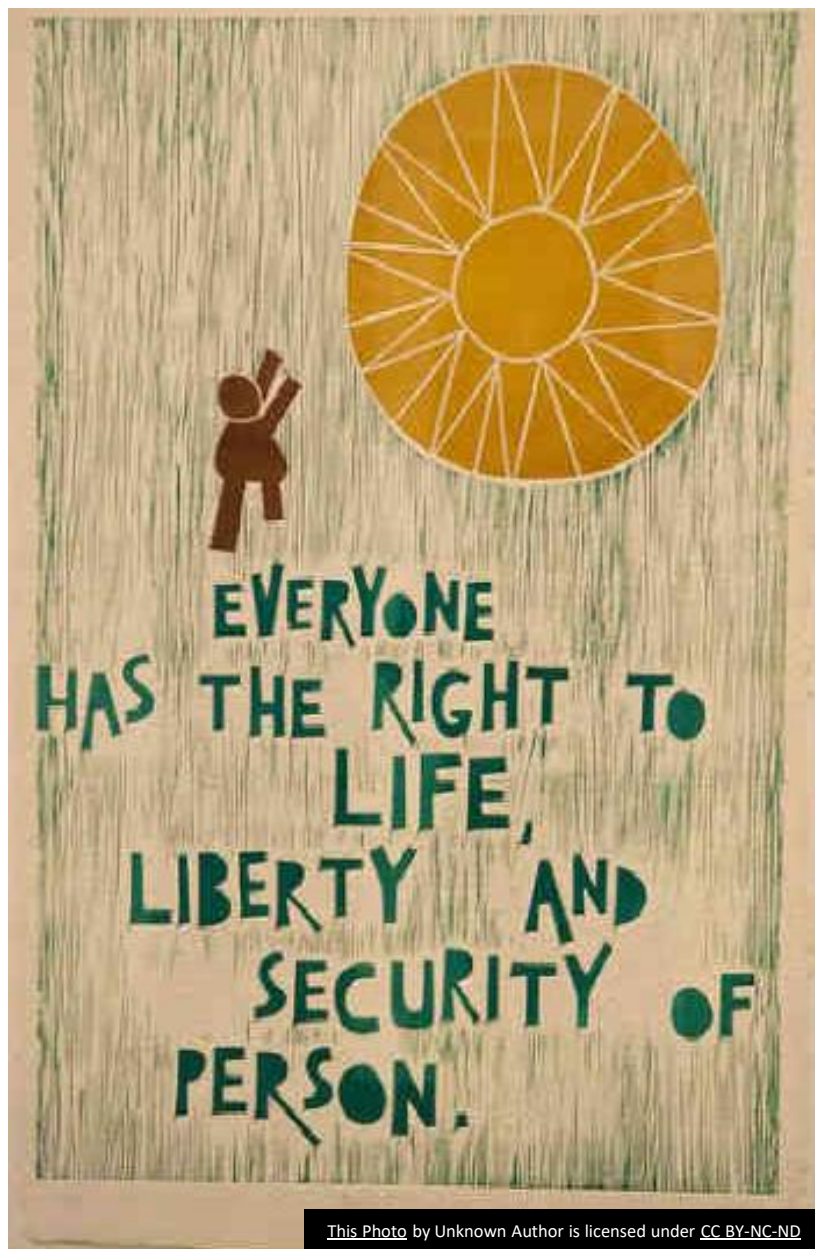
Thank you

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