



APPLYING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS
TO VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS
ACROSS NONPROFITS

VOLUNTEER

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FEBRUARY 2023

CONGRESSIONAL
HUNGER CENTER

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INTRODUCTION

Context

This Huger Free Report was birthed from my work plan at About Fresh, a Boston area nonprofit that makes strides to address food insecurity in the city and strengthen communities by getting fresh and healthy foods to the households that need it most through its two programs, Fresh Truck and Fresh Connect. At About Fresh, one of primary roles was to expand the recruitment, retention, and training of volunteers. During my time I have been able to speak and connect with a number of volunteers to better understand their experiences and needs to inform my work of necessary transformation within the organization's programs.

Objective

Through my work and findings at my field site placement, this report will inform and serve as a global toolkit for nonprofits to assess whether a Racial Equity Lens is being applied to their current volunteer programs and if not, how to begin with some fundamental steps. By using this toolkit, nonprofits can cultivate a space that fosters inclusion, security, and communication between their organization and volunteers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to dedicate a special thanks to the following organization and Black Men and Women who have shared their knowledge and lived experiences with me. I am grateful for their continued support throughout the field placement part of this fellowship and for broadening my knowledge of advocacy, outreach, and organizing surrounding hunger and poverty. I would also like to express thanks to the Emerson Fellows for inspiring the topic of this Hunger Free Community Report. *Live in Power*



Tony Jackson, Director, Emerson National Hunger Fellowship Program
Paige Clay, Program Associate, Emerson National Hunger Program
Amira Awuala, 28th Class, Emerson National Hunger Fellow
Morgan McKinney, 28th Class, Emerson National Hunger Fellow

Thank you to the following Woman of Color for the continuous lessons and words of wisdom she has provided me with and creating safe spaces to have open and honest conversations on advancing racial equity in my field work .



Marlysa D. Gamblin, Founder and CEO, GamblinConsults, LLC

I would also like to express thanks to the individuals at my field site organization including my supervisors, field site partner, volunteers, and the Black and Brown community members that I have had the opportunity to build a relationship with and learn from. A big thanks to the Co-Founder of About Fresh and his verbage of "moving in fellowship with instead of partnership" as well as "appropriately revern" that inspired some of the steps within this toolkit.



Seana Weaver, Managing Director, Fresh Truck
Gustey Vilme, Manager, Fresh Truck Program
Josh Tautwein, Co-Founder / Chief Executive Officer, About Fresh

MY FIELD PLACEMENT

About Fresh is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit located in the Boston area. About Fresh was founded in 2016 by Josh Trautwein, a former healthcare educator. While working at a Health Center, he repeatedly heard families who found it was difficult to access healthy food and the center did not have their own plan for getting patients access to health foods. Through this the idea and implementation of Fresh Truck, a mobile market, stocked with fresh food and vegetables on renovated school busses, came about. About Fresh's mission is to strengthen communities by getting fresh food to households that need it the most and the vision is to work towards a future where everyone has enough food to be healthy, happy, and hopeful. Fresh Truck Markets serve roughly 21 different communities across Boston currently. About Fresh also has a secondary program known as Fresh Connect. Fresh Connect is a food prescription program that provides people with the money and flexibility to buy the healthy foods they need. With Fresh Connect, healthcare organizations can cover the cost of healthy foods for their food insecure patients by enrolling them into the program.



My field site has given me the opportunity to learn from, connect with, and explore Greater Boston and its communities on a more personal level. Before coming to Boston, the Fellows spent a week in Washington, DC for an orientation where we learned a number of things but one key piece of advice and instruction that stuck with me was to respect the communities we were going into by continuously being aware of how we were showing up into the different spaces. Coming into it I wanted to be intentional in having a heart and mindset of service in which I acknowledge the community's needs first in order to serve effectively and wholeheartedly. Working with the Fresh Truck program has shown me first-hand and on a day-to-day basis, the impact that delivering healthy and affordable foods has on food insecure communities, but even more so how black and brown individuals are impacted as a majority of Fresh Truck shoppers are BIPOC. In the moments where I felt overwhelmed, it was these individuals that pushed me to identify the gaps in the work being done and find solutions which is why I will continue to show up for those whose voices matter and should be at the center of this work. I would not have expected to learn as much as I have during my short time here and I can only express gratitude to each and every person I've had contact with along the way whether at About Fresh or out at markets and pop-ups that has impacted my work and life in one way or another.

SECTION 1

Defining

profanation

prof a na tion (prŏf'ə-nā-shən) n. the
state of being profane; sacrilege

pro-fane (prŏ-fān) adj. 1. not sacred;
irreverent; sacrilegious; as, a profane
gesture. 2. not religious; as, a profane
man. 3. not learned; as, a profane
question.

pro-**fessed** (prŏ-fes'ed) adj. 1. openly
acknowledged; as, a professed
friend. 2. pretended; as, a
professed scholar.

pro-**fession** (prŏ-fesh'ən) n. 1. a
declaration of faith or belief; as,
the Christian profession. 2. a
vowal or religious act; as, the
profession of a monk. 3. a
learning, as, the profession of
the persons engaged in any one
of the liberal arts.

Syn. business, grade, occupation,
employment.

pro-**fession-al** (prŏ-fesh'ən-əl) adj. 1. pertaining
to a profession; as, a profession-
al baseball player. 2. requiring a
superior training; as, a profession-
al singer.

or occupation requiring a superior
training; as, a profession-
al singer. 3. following a calling as a means of
living; as, a professional baseball player; a
professional singer. 4. making his living by an occupation
distinguished from an amateur, or
practices it occasionally or for pleasure;
as, the singer has the air of a professional.

pro-**fessor** (prŏ-fes'sər) n. 1. one who
teaches in a college, university,
or school. 2. one who professes
a religion; as, a professor of
theology.

pro-**fes-so-ri-al** (prŏ-fes'sŏ-ri-əl) adj. 1. pertaining
to a professor; as, a profes-
sor-ship.

pro-**fes-sor-ship** (prŏ-fes'sŏr-ship) n. 1. the
office of a professor; as, a profes-
sor-ship in theology.

KEY TERMS

DEFINITION

Racial Equity vs Equality

The key distinction between equity and equality is the approach and outcomes. Equality looks to merely treat everyone the same without considering needs. Creating a racially equitable space however, involves meeting people where they are and providing the necessary tools and resources for their recognized needs that will empower them to achieve desirable outcomes.

White Supremacy

White supremacy, like racism, is a system that is upheld by everyone when we don't actively work to dismantle it. White supremacy can be upheld by white people when they internalize unconscious racial dominance. White supremacy can be upheld by BIPOC when they internalize unconscious racial oppression (Gamblin, Racial Equity Training, 2022) .

Unconscious Bias

A bias we are unaware of and that happens outside of our control
A bias that happens automatically when our brains make quick judgements and assessments of people and situations that are influenced by our background, cultural environment, and past experiences (Paula Martin Cultural Competency Course, Clark University, 2022).

Co-Creation

Fellowship vs Partnership

Moving in fellowship instead of partnership with our volunteers signifies that we are working under one mission. Rather than creating a transactional relationship, work towards providing resources, support, and professional development that will nurture and maintain a long-lasting relationship.



RACIAL EQUITY

What IT Is:

Talking about equity is not enough without looking at it from a racial lens. By applying a Racial Equity lens to your volunteer programs you are actively looking to eliminate racial disparities in policies, practices, systems, and structures. Through an intentional commitment to prioritizing Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), their needs, and centering their voices you are also working to reach measurable change and better outcomes for all.

(Martinez, 2022) & (Emerson Fellow Program Orientation, 2022)

What It Is Not:

Racial Equity work does not look to BIPOC as a monolith for change. Requiring or implementing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training for staff will not suffice neither does it show how individuals' actions will change regardless of how it impacts their attitudes. DEI does not translate to a fairer, safer workspace where a racism problem doesn't exist. "Companies reflect communities — and racism exists, individually and systematically, within communities" (Janet Foutty , EC Deloitte US , 2021).

RACIAL INEQUITY

What It Is:

When discussing racial inequity, what is to be understood is the disadvantages in policies, programs, and practices that lead to adverse outcomes for communities of color. Racial Inequity can and often times take place within the three:

Structural - political and social disadvantages in society such as higher rates of poverty and death by diseases amongst people of color compared to their white counterparts.

Institutional - relating to institutions like education and health that target individuals and subject them to lower expectations.

Institutionalized racism can also be commonly found in procedural language that is used, but not universally understood

Interpersonal/Individual - Bias, stereotypes, and/or other generalizations that come from how we perceive others, resulting in unfair and unjust treatment whether consciously or unconsciously.

(Martinez, United Way of the National Capital Area, 2022)

CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Cultural proficiency means widening our thinking and having a bigger pot of more than just our personal values

- (1) Assess Culture – acknowledge the differences and identify them; assess one’s own culture
- (2) Value Diversity —claim the differences, claim your identity; view life from a culturally inclusive perspective
- (3) Manage the Dynamics of Difference —reframe the differences; offer resources for conflict resolution including strategies that are sensitive to cultural diversity in terms of behavioral/social differences
- (4) Adapt to Diversity —train others about differences; recognize the need for change in policies and practices to honor diversity; maintain culturally proficient environments
- (5) Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge —propose and implement the culturally proficient policies;

Cultural Proficiency Continuum

Cultural destructiveness — See Difference, Stomp it out

Cultural Incompetence — See Difference, Make it Wrong

Cultural Blindness —See Difference, Act like you Don’t

Cultural Pre-Competence – See Difference, respond inappropriately

Cultural Competence — See Difference, Understand Difference it Makes

Cultural Proficiency —See Difference, Respond Appropriately & positively

"Have to see a difference because individuals have different needs"

(Paula Martin Cultural Competency Course, Clark University, 2022).



RACIAL HEALING

In the essence of what this paper is discussing, applying a Racial Equity lens also constitutes undertaking and enforcing Racial Healing within your organizations and volunteer programs. Racial Healing is a necessary process for individuals and communities. Years of racism can't be undone in one day, one week, one month, or one year. It is a process that sadly needs to take place again and again. It is a step in the right direction to build trust and strengthen relationships.

"Racial healing is at the heart of racial equity – the people work that leads to community, organizational and systems transformation"

(W.K. Kellogg Foundation, n.d.)

If you weren't previously aware, January 17th is a national day and devotion of Racial Healing which was launched in 2017 by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and is part of the US Movement for Truth, Racial, Healing, and Transformation (TRHT), developed alongside Dr. Gail Christopher. On this day the American Library Association (ALA), Association of Research Libraries (ARL), and Society of American Archivists (SAA) encourages leaders and organizations to engage in three ways: devoting time for a healing hour, sharing your org's learning in pursuit of racial justice and healing, and reviewing resources that will put you in the mindset of how to honor the day of Racial Healing, not just on January 17th, but continuously.

information contained on this page is taken from Healing Our Communities Webpage & the American Library Association.

NONPROFIT INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

A look at who's been historically excluded and who has been invited

The industrial complex contains a network of both private and public institutions (state, people, businesses, and nonprofits), who provide social service, "usually with financial aid from corporations and the government", and uphold power (Samimi, 2010). The relationship formed between these institutions works to advance personal interest, restricting how we operate within the nonprofit sector, and enforcing how the voices of those impacted by inequity are ignored and/or silenced.

Another way the nonprofit industrial complex upholds inequity and repression is through philanthropic giving that foundation staff determine. Often, foundations are not representative of the communities they serve which is proven through a 2014 study that found 91% of executive directors, 83% of executive staff, and 68% of program directors are white. The same study found that only 7% of foundation grant giving went to towards nonprofits that explicitly served people of color (Morgan-Montoya, 2020). Also, "the need for approval from the government for tax status (and therefore ability to apply for and receive funding) has historically marginalized minority groups "(Samimi, 2010).

The structure of the nonprofit sector more often than not, maintains state order or the status quo, making it harder for change to happen when individuals within nonprofits seek it out; there is a common resistance to change that is hard to combat.

(Tracy, 2021)

HISTORY OF LABOR IN ANTI-BLACKNESS: A BRIEF TIMELINE

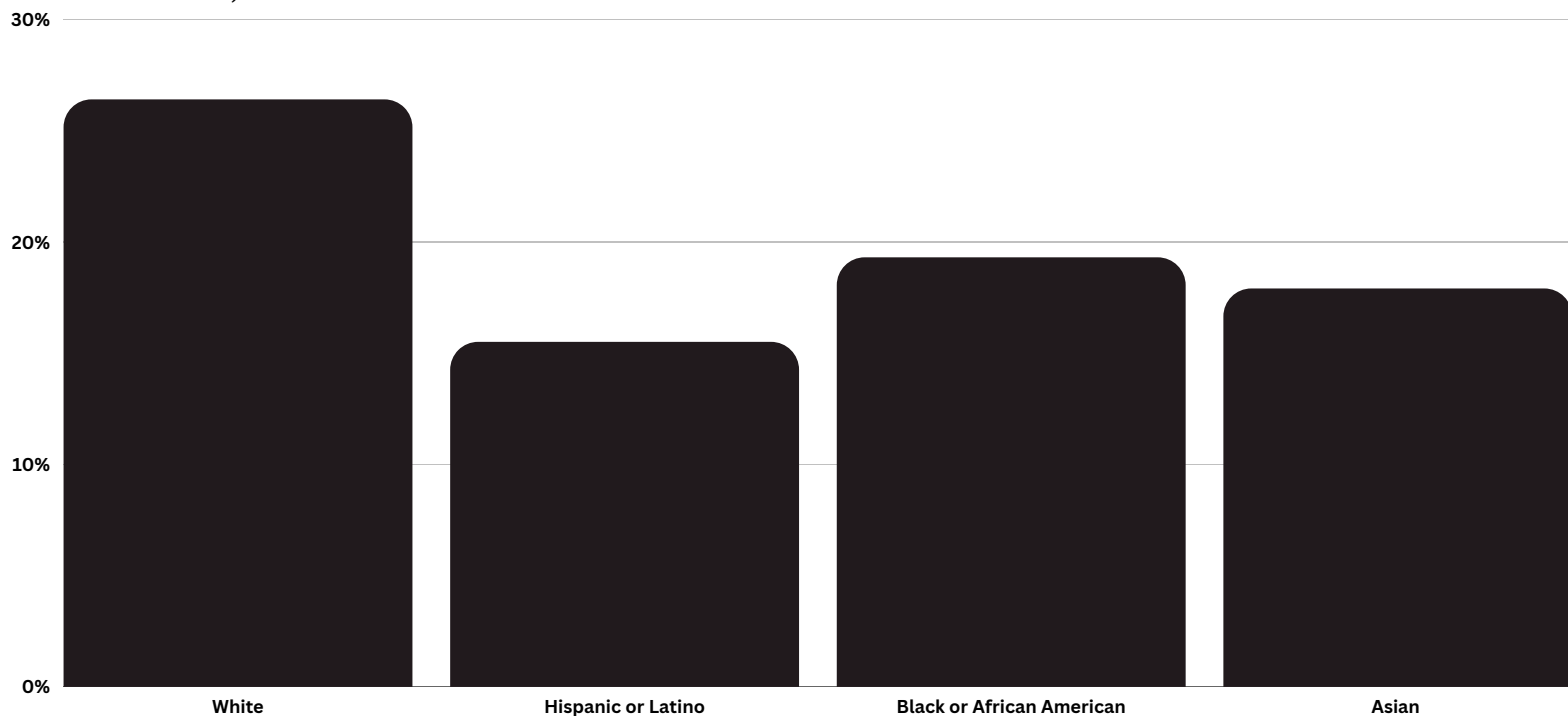
From the first African slaves brought to the shores of the American colonies in the 1600s to the present day, African Americans have an active and intricate role in the history of labor [...] and have filled a wide range of roles vital in building and sustaining the nation's economy (Dyson, n.d.)

- **1619 - First African Slaves Brought to the New World:** A Dutch ship brought 20 Africans ashore at the British colony of Jamestown.
- **17th -18th century - Enslaved Africans worked mainly on the tobacco, rice and indigo plantations of the southern coast.** Throughout the 17th century European settlers in North America regarded enslaved Africans cheaper, more plentiful labor than indentured servants who were mostly poor Europeans
- **1808 - Congress outlawed the African slave trade, but slavery was not yet abolished.** Prior to, the British operated slave trade across the Atlantic as one of the biggest businesses in the 18th century. By 1860 the US recorded nearly 4 million enslaved black people or 13% of the population (U.S. Census)
- **1865 The Thirteenth Amendment Abolishes Slavery.** Still, slavery was vital to the South and the economy relied on the production of crops like tobacco and cotton.
- **1877-1950 - Jim Crow segregation that enforced racial segregation between the end of the Reconstruction and beginning of the civil rights movement.** During this time, African Americans were denied opportunities like the right to vote, hold a job, and get an education. Black codes were established which were strict local and state laws that detailed when, where and how formerly enslaved people could work, and for how much compensation. The codes appeared throughout the South as a legal way to put Black citizens into indentured servitude among many other things.
- **1896 - Plessy v. Ferguson "Separate but Equal".** U.S. Supreme Court "separate but equal" decision approved/upheld laws requiring racial segregation, as long as those laws did not allow for separate accommodations and facilities for blacks that were inferior to those for whites.
- **1963 - Congress passed Equal Pay Act,** a federal law requiring that employers pay all employees equally, protecting men and women from sex-based discrimination
- **1964 - The Civil Rights Act** prohibits discrimination in a number of settings: voting, public accommodations, public facilities, public education, federally-assisted programs, and employment and establishes the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).
- **1965 - Equal Employment Act (Title VII, the ADEA, ADA)** prohibits compensation discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability

Findings from: U.S. Census, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, & HISTORY network

VOLUNTEER DEMOGRAPHICS

The data/figures presented in the previous tables show, on average, the volunteer demographic percentage collected by the Corporation for National and Community Service Survey (CNCS). Some organizations may possess an organization demographics profile that collects information on the individuals who work and volunteer with your organization are. Whereas, other organizations may not be in the habit or practice of collecting gender, race and ethnicity, and disability status information, to name a few.



Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) Survey

The figure above is significant because it shows that there are just as many BIPOC who volunteer, on average, compared to their white counterparts. These percentages, however, don't correlate to how many of the organizations volunteered at, implement racial equity into their programs. Nonetheless, knowing and acknowledging who is in your organization in some way or another is a good habit to get into after all you can't give what you think people need, without knowing who they are and the actual needs they have. Also, the resources provided and assistance given to one group may not be what is needed for another group. What is to note and remember is that BIPOC are not a monolith or representation for each other so do not make the mistake of treating them all the same.

DO'S & DON'TS FOR APPLYING A RACIAL EQUITY LENS



DO

- ✓ Create a safe space before asking any questions
- ✓ Look to share power (Co-Create) & alter your approach with a mindset of service that is not only equitable, but **racially equitable**
- ✓ Call out systemic racism in your organizations practices and programs
- ✓ Work to understand and dismantle myths that exist
- ✓ Center & respect those with lived experiences and honor their stories



DON'T

- ✗ Try to interpret the needs people may have
- ✗ Lead like a savior (aka adopting a savior leadership style) by trying to "fix" people and circumstances
- ✗ Be close-minded or defensive to change as that upholds systemic barriers
- ✗ Assume everyone has the same understanding of a problem
- ✗ Take advantage of lived experiences and historical trauma by tokenizing individuals

CALLING OUT RACISM

During the field site portion of the fellowship, fellows engaged in several racial equity trainings with Marlysa Gamblin. During one training specifically we each learned and took time in small groups to call out racism through the steps provided to us by Marlysa. This was a useful exercise for myself and one that equipped me to better think through calling out racism when it occurs in my workplace and how to receive correction when I commit racism. Though I may not be able to execute the steps precisely when presented with a racist situation or dialogue, I have no excuse of it not becoming fluid or second nature given the resources I have available to me.

“Marginalized groups live with paper cuts and receive them every day. When we are silent or don’t lean in to support someone, we are allowing that paper cut” (Paula Martin Cultural Competency Course, Clark University, 2022).

How to call racism?

- (1) Make an observation instead of an inference that addresses what took place (ex. “What I heard was,” “What I noticed was”,
- (2) Call attention to the impact of racism
- (3) Ask an open ended question that encourages thinking about impact (ex. “What are ways you recognize your statement enforcing racial stereotypes?” “I’m curious to know what you were thinking when you said this or what you meant”,
- 4) Invite mutual reflection from the other person.

How to receive correction?

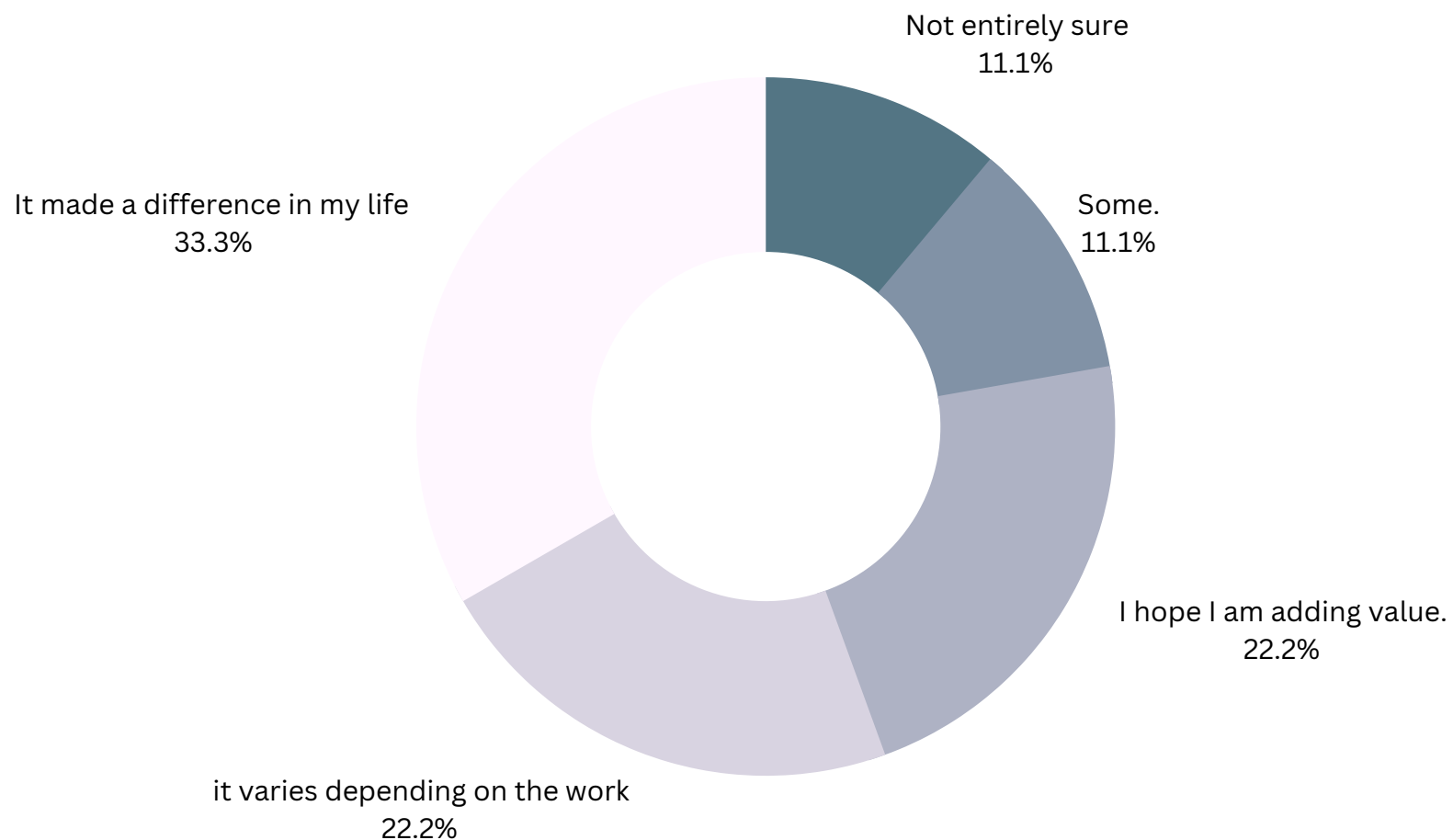
- (1) Ownership, – be very specific with what you did
- (2) Apologize
- (3) Accept that intent does not equal impact and therefore you shouldn't make your response based primarily on your intent. "Impact is on you. How others feel and how they are impacted matters the most" (Paula Martin Cultural Competency Course, Clark University, 2022)
- (4) Commit to do better by setting up time markers and verbalize how you are going to hold yourself accountable.

(Gamblin Racial Equity Training, 2023)

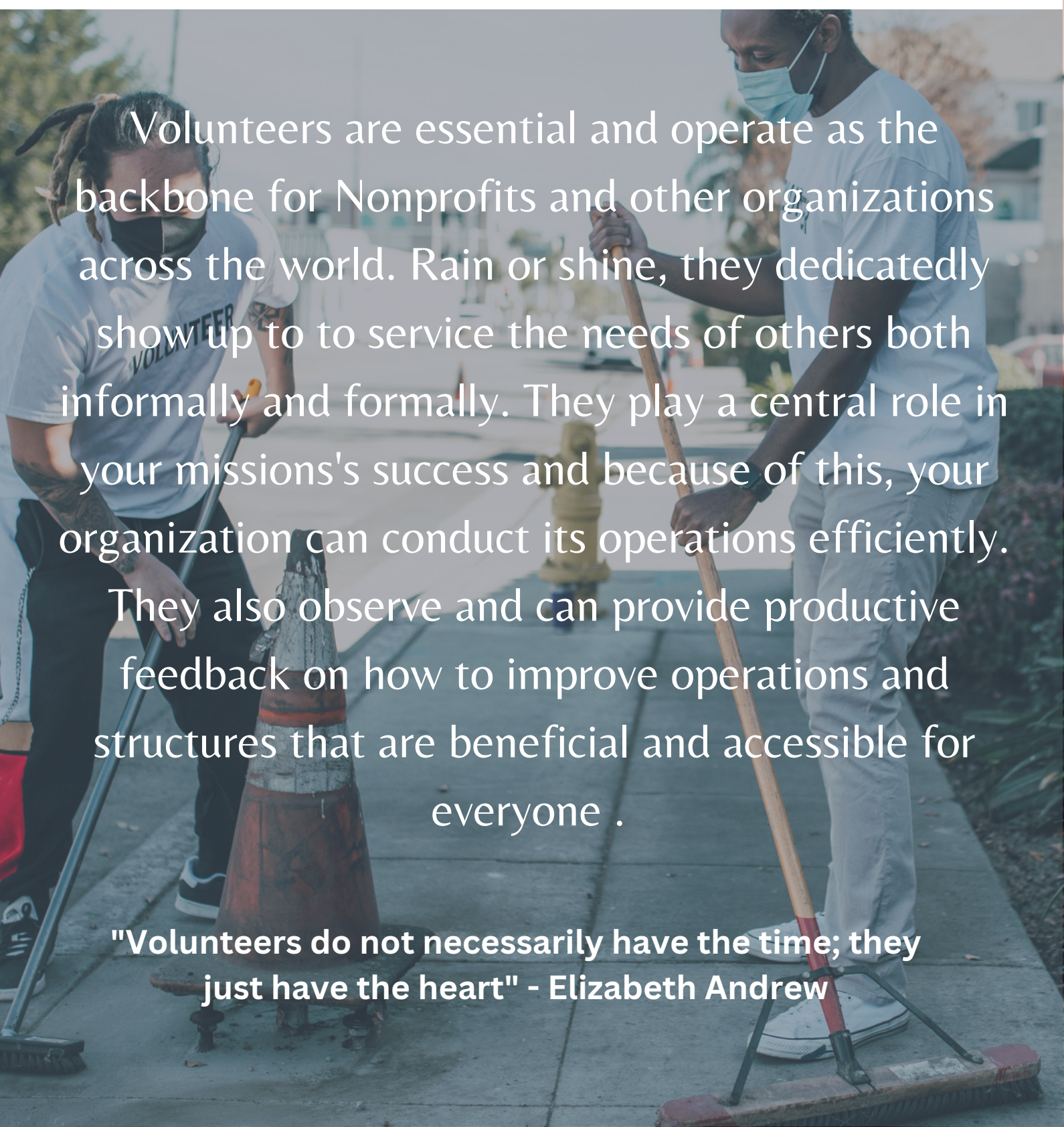
FINDINGS FROM MY FIELD PLACEMENT

During my field placement, I created a volunteer feedback survey to identify area needs and how individuals understood and/or interpreted their role as volunteers as well as the difference that they were making in the lives of the shoppers and larger community. Presented in this chart are some of the results and responses:

How much of a difference do you feel volunteering made/contributed to the market?



HOW DO VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

A photograph of two volunteers sweeping a sidewalk. The volunteer on the left is a man with dreadlocks, wearing a white t-shirt with 'VOLUNTEER' printed on it, black pants, and a black face mask. The volunteer on the right is a man wearing a white t-shirt, white pants, and a light blue face mask. They are both using brooms to sweep the concrete sidewalk. In the background, there is a yellow fire hydrant and some greenery. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, sans-serif font.

Volunteers are essential and operate as the backbone for Nonprofits and other organizations across the world. Rain or shine, they dedicatedly show up to to service the needs of others both informally and formally. They play a central role in your missions's success and because of this, your organization can conduct its operations efficiently. They also observe and can provide productive feedback on how to improve operations and structures that are beneficial and accessible for everyone .

"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart" - Elizabeth Andrew



AREAS THAT VOLUNTEERS
SHOW
UP
&
SHOW
OUT



Agriculture



Health



Children & Youth



Communtiy
Development



Education



Conservation



SECTION 2

Application

WHERE DOES MONEY COME IN?

"What if we attached financial value to lived experience people can bring to a service organisation, system, job or activity? "

(Lucy Watts CEO Lived Experience Learning, 2021)

Where money is involved, so are a mix of emotions about it. Popular phrases that are often heard and said are, "we don't have money for it" or "it doesn't fit in the budget". Truth is there are a number of ways you can pay or compensate a volunteer and a number of ways reasons as to why you should. In the Do's and Don'ts of applying a racial equity lens, this report briefly touches on what it can look like to take advantage of lived experiences. Lived experiences accounts for the personal experience of individuals with health needs, impairments, who are disadvantaged, and who are of marginalized groups.

Taking advantage can happen subconsciously and consciously, by asking individuals to contribute to surveys, interviews, speaking on behalf of a community, and helping to perform other organizational services without being formal employees and without being paid. If you're going to ask people to perform services on behalf of your organization, especially when it comes to opening up about trauma, their time and voices should be honored.

WAYS TO COMPENSATE

Depending on the services your organization provides and the work that your volunteers will be doing, compensation might look different. For instances, if your organization engages with hunger relief and runs mobile markets like my field site organization, then you may write in compensation as X worth of free produce after a completed volunteer shift. While this may be something you find to work, you should re-evaluate how your volunteers find it to be beneficial or not and then work towards other ways to provide support based on the need and ask.

Forms of Monetary Compensation



Gift Card (Visas)



Voucher



Cash

"It is encouraged to go to people directly and ask them outside of cash, what are the primary areas that they would best receive support in (i.e. groceries, general spending, gas money, etc.). This should then inform what type of gift cards your members and funders get (i.e. visas, walmart, giant, etc.). And perhaps visas are the safest because it is basically like cash without being cash, and offers the most flexibility and dignity. The partners and members would be able to write these off as gifts and donations" .

(Gamblin Office Hours, 2022).

WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH VOLUNTEERS



Phone calls/check-ins



Questionnaires/
Surveys



Newsletters



Invites



Site Visits



Email

Being intentional in the ways you engage with volunteers outside of their typical volunteer experience is important. By making an effort to establish a healthy and direct line of communication with your volunteers you can begin to identify areas of growth for both your organization and the volunteers as well as how to better assess needs. Volunteers may not be tell you what they need upon first reaching out and communicating with them, but be ensured that they will if they feel comfortable and respected. Leave room and the door open for this to happen.



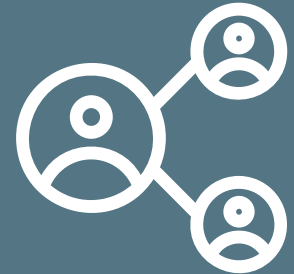
WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH VOLUNTEERS

While there may be a single person or two within your organization that spearheads the volunteer program, everyone in the organization should get to know who the volunteers are that are helping to drive the organization's mission. This is why site visits are a great opportunity to get better acquainted. Site visits don't have to be something you factor in your schedule on a weekly basis, but it should be done at least once a month.

Organization's may feel hesitant to extend an invite to volunteers to attend internal meetings and events if its not something customary. They may not want to for other reasons as well which can include resistance to change or outside opinion and not wanting to share details that can reflect back badly on the organization. Believe it or not some volunteers want the opportunity to attend a staff meeting and find out what the organization is planning.

5 TIPS

How to Create or Strengthen Your Volunteer Newsletter



1 Start with gratitude

2 Include recognition

3 Share openly/ be transparent

4 Offer resources and opportunities

5 Be open to constructive feedback

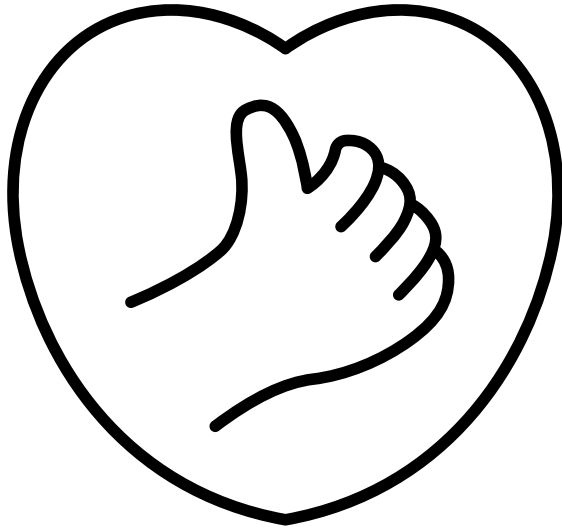


For the newsletter I would love to learn more about the broader initiatives and progress [...] For example, what are the plans for expansion [...] It keeps volunteers connected to the mission & provides a good perspective on the overall services the org - and the volunteers - are providing to the city.

(About Fresh, Volunteer Survey, 2022)

Volunteers sign up to a newsletter because they want to receive news, updates, and overall communication from your organization. In some cases volunteers are even looking to get involved more whether that be with your organization or alongside it for another cause/event. Regularly keeping in touch and keeping their attention will positively affect the relationship that you have established and/or are trying to establish.

WAYS TO SHOW APPRECIATION



1. Gathering Events (ex. Brunch, Banquets)
2. Small gifts and gestures (ex. organization merch, Dunkin donut gift cards, Handwritten cards)
3. Volunteer Spotlight/ Recognition (ex. new sign-ups, birthdays, tracked hours)

Honoring Identity based months:

- Hispanic Heritage Month Sep. 15 - Oct. 10.
- Black History Month Feb 1 – March 1
- Women’s History Month March 1 – March 31
- Indigenous People Day Oct. 10th.
- Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month - May

..... and the list goes on!

CONCLUSION

There are a number of ways that nonprofits can acknowledge and implement racial equity into their mission, relationships, programs, and conversations. From the nonprofit complex to the everyday structures that limit the power to change and demonize Black, Indigenous, People of Color, there is enough reason as to why change and transformation is needed, especially when looking at it from a racially equitable lens. No organization can and will be racially equitable overnight, but taking the actions step now as outlined in this report will better align you to adopt an anti-racist vision and approach for the future of your organization that will better prepare you for becoming racially equitable. More importantly, empowering individuals with a lived experience of hunger, poverty, and oppression is the foremost important action step to comprehend and illuminate. It is in the best interest that your work should reflect the needs of your community and that can only be possible when they are invited and included. There is much more that this report can go into detail and research on, however, this guide is ultimately meant to be built upon and defined for your organization. As a learning piece that should guide your next steps, I'll leave you with the same question that was once presented to me:

“What are the myths and how is your organization working to dismantle it?”

(Levers of Change: Grassroots Advocacy and Community Organizing, Presentation, 2022).

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