



ANTI-RACISM REPORT

July – September 2020

Introduction

In summer 2020, STAR's CEO and Vice President issued a statement about institutional change to eliminate racism being a moral imperative. Since that time, we've been engaging in conversations internally with fellow staff to set priorities for advancing this type of institutional change within STAR. Similarly to how we prioritize institutional and culture change to eliminate sexual violence, we are focusing on institutional and culture change to eliminate racism within our sphere of control, and to make demands to eliminate racism in our sphere of influence. With this framework in mind, below are some agency-wide objectives we've set for this year to reach these goals.

1. Launch an anti-racism committee.
2. Facilitate critical conversations among staff.
3. Develop policies and procedures and provide staff training.
4. Update STAR's core training.
5. Review our community partnerships.
6. Think more intentionally about leadership development within STAR.
7. Maintain STAR's Person of Color Network.

This Quarterly Anti-Racism Report provides updates on our current initiatives during July through September of 2020. For additional information, please visit our website at <https://star.ngo/anti-racism-work/>.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please email info@star.ngo.

Progress

OBJECTIVE 1

Launch an anti-racism committee.

STAR's Capital Area Regional Director Kirsten Raby and Vice President Rebecca Marchiafava are co-leading a multiracial committee to help drive change within STAR. The first committee meeting was held in September 2020 and began with an orientation to the committee. We plan to meet monthly to work on the initiatives outlined below. "Committees" and "task forces" can get a bad reputation when they don't lead to actionable change. At STAR, we will strive to ensure that these meetings a) allow for needed communication and b) drive action. To demonstrate accountability for the work done by this committee and by STAR overall, we plan to publish quarterly reports about efforts to advance anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion within STAR. These reports will be made available internally and to the public as well.

OBJECTIVE 2

Facilitate critical conversations among staff.

As we continue to delve into internal conversations about race and racism, certain topics have emerged that we want to bring to all our staff for discussion and input. We plan to use these critical conversations to drive changes in policy and practice and to inform training for staff, which connects to our next goal.

OBJECTIVE 3

Develop policies and procedures, and provide staff training in key areas to change STAR culture.

When there are issues in an organization, people commonly call for training to address those issues. What we know, however, is that while training can be an important part of solutions, training alone will not solve the problem.

Addressing microaggressions was a key topic that came up repeatedly in our recent one on one conversations with staff, and this is a topic we're prioritizing for staff training, but first, we are prioritizing staff discussion and policy development for this topic to inform training so that our solution can be more holistic and ultimately effective.

In addition to procedure development for handling microaggressions, our anti-racism committee will review a long list of opportunities for policy/procedure development and prioritize updates we wish to make. In addition to policy and procedure development, STAR is currently offering participation in the Dialogue on Race Louisiana series to all staff, which focuses on institutional racism and institutional change to eliminate racism. It is not a training, rather it is an educational process. We hope that hosting this series as an organization will be helpful to providing a shared framework for creating institutional change to eliminate racism.

We are open to providing other training options, however we are facing funding barriers due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVE 4

Update STAR's Core Training.

STAR provides a 40-hour core training consisting of 20 hours of online education and 20 hours of in-person training to all staff, interns and volunteers. We plan to update this foundational training to include more information that connects to our anti-oppression and anti-racism framework.

Topics that we plan to add or expand in the core training include:

- Racial trauma
- Institutional racism
- Intersections of racism and sexual violence
- Experiences of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) who experience sexual violence

The updates to our core training will be informed by discussions at the anti-racism committee and larger critical conversations we have as a whole staff.

OBJECTIVE 5

Review our community partnerships.

Last year, STAR's Person of Color (POC) Network identified lack of POC representation on STAR's Board and Regional Councils as an issue that needed addressing. This recommendation drove conversation at subsequent Board and Regional Council meetings about the importance of shifting to having these structures represent the communities we serve, specifically through being more intentional about recruiting non-White individuals to serve on our Councils.

"Diversifying" executive boards, similar to "diversifying" staff, is a tricky issue. Common efforts to diversify White-dominated organizations lead to tokenization, something we want to avoid. True inclusion and representation can only come from, again, deeper institutional and culture change.

One of the things we recognize is that our Board members are often elected to the Board after serving on our Regional Councils, and many of our Regional Council members connect to STAR through existing community partnerships and social connections with STAR leaders. To become more conscious and intentional about who is represented on our Regional Councils, we are working to assess our community partnerships and identify: 1) Who do we currently have partnerships with who may be a good fit for serving on the Regional Council but have not been asked to serve? AND 2) What communities do we need to more intentionally build relationships with that can lead to greater inclusion at the levels of the Board and Regional Councils? We are beginning a process of assessing our community partnerships to drive changes in this area.

Another step we've taken is to streamline our process for Board and Regional Council nominations. Previously, people were nominating potential members for consideration at any time of the year. These nominations, especially in New Orleans, often resulted from informal conversations at social events. Given the racial segregation of our communities and social networks, these practices have perpetuated our Board and Regional Councils being White-dominated. Conducting a nomination and election process once per year will allow for a more intentional, streamlined process and strategic consideration of how nominated members reflect our commitment to inclusion and representation.

OBJECTIVE 6

Think more intentionally about leadership development within STAR.

Leadership development is a key focus for promoting diversity, equity and inclusion within organizations. Non-intentional leadership development practices can result in the advancement of those who are more privileged or those who have more similarities to people already in positions of leadership. Though we've come a long way in recent years regarding the hiring and promotion of Black and POC staff members, we still have work to do when it comes to planning for the future. For this reason, we plan to develop clearer, more intentional processes for leadership development at STAR.

OBJECTIVE 7

Maintain STAR's Person of Color Network.

In 2017, STAR staff members established a Person of Color (POC) Network. The POC Network will continue to offer a safe space for POC staff members to fellowship, support and learn from each other how to navigate the intersections between racism and sexual violence, and to organize events and initiatives that focus specifically on meeting needs of POC survivors and community members.