

Racial Equity Values at CLASP

We understand that inclusion is only the first step toward fostering sustainable racial equity, in our society, and within our organizational culture. At CLASP, we value the importance of including multiple perspectives in how we shape our organizational culture and engage in our policy and advocacy efforts. However, we also know that to move beyond inclusion and to achieve true racial equity we must be intentional in centering and prioritizing the voices, perspectives and lived experiences of people of color. At CLASP, racial equity is our core value and informs all aspects of our organizational culture and the way we think about and approach our policy, issue, and advocacy areas. For true and sustainable change to happen in our country, historically white founded and led policy and advocacy organizations must commit to full and immersive racial equity.

The following values inform our approach to centering racial equity:

- We value the voices, perspectives, and expertise of our staff of color as we think about our organizational culture, norms, policies, and practices, as well as our policy work.
- We value the importance of full engagement and participation within our organizational culture; meaning that we commit to enhancing structures, practices, and approaches that foster equity and dismantle white dominant culture.
- We value solidarity; meaning that we are committed to seeing and prioritizing all communities of color in our organizational culture and in our external policy and advocacy efforts.
- We value all efforts that lead toward fostering an inclusive work environment, meaning that micro-aggressive and racist behavior towards staff of color will be addressed.
- We value individual and collective accountability, and restorative justice, meaning that staff and leadership hold themselves and each other accountable for the harms that they cause.
- We value the importance of centering people of color with lived experiences in our policy, advocacy, and partnership efforts. This means engaging directly within communities with our partners and collaborators engaged in community organizing to develop our policy and advocacy strategies and approaches.
- We value building external partnerships and coalitions with grassroots, other advocacy organizations, individuals, and funders seeking to build systems that break down racist structures, policies, and programs.
- We value the importance of understanding the history for anti-Blackness and colonialism in this country and how it creates the model for the systemic racism that affects all communities of color.
- We value the importance of fighting for policies that dismantle poverty and racism and build a society that enables all to thrive, and, at the same time value the importance of fighting against policies that uphold systemic and institutional racism.
- We value boldly communicating externally with partners, funders, and key stakeholders our commitment to centering racial equity, and we commit to leading by example in how we advance equity in our policy and advocacy efforts through authenticity, inclusiveness, and culture and narrative change.

Definition of Racial Equity at CLASP

Racial equity at CLASP is defined as intentionally centering the role of race and the deeply rooted history in the United States of systemic racism toward communities of color within how we think about and frame

our organizational culture, policies, practices, and norms. In addition, we center it in how we think about, approach, and address our policy, issue, and advocacy efforts.

We center racial equity in our organizational culture by lifting and prioritizing the needs, interests, voices, and the intersected cultural perspectives of communities of color. The lived experiences, knowledge, and guidance of communities of color directly inform how we understand our policy and issue areas, and how we frame our solutions and recommendations.

This requires us to prioritize building sustainable and authentic relationships as a trusted and committed partner within communities that have historically been harmed by the implementation of racist and supremacist policies.

This requires us to seek out partnerships with organizations that directly represent and organize communities of color, to respect their voices and leadership, as we constantly assess and improve how our policy advocacy role complements theirs.

This requires us to incorporate the direct voices and lived experiences of communities of color in how we analyze data, both quantitatively and qualitatively

This requires us to advocate for legislation to undo and repairs much of the harm caused by racist policies, while also challenging legislation or the implementation of policies and/or programs that maintain systems of racial inequities, whether deliberately or by failing to compensate for historical wrongs.

Racial equity at CLASP informs every aspect of our work, our relationships, and how we think about our important role in eradicating racism and poverty within our society.

CLASP's Racial Equity Mission

We understand that poverty in America is inextricably tied to systemic racism. We will explicitly and with intention, focus our policy and advocacy efforts for economic and racial justice on addressing systemic racism as the primary cause of poverty for communities of color in the United States. We believe that centering communities of color in our advocacy leads to policies that advance economic justice for everyone. We work in partnership with the people most impacted to move policies that promote racial and economic justice and opportunity from vision to policy to practice.

Vision for Racial Equity at CLASP

The impact of systemic racism transcends generations, especially in regard to achieving fair and equitable education, economic, and employment opportunities. Public policy in these areas has historically been white centered in its practice, narrative, and culture in a way that has perpetuated exclusion of impacted people of color rather than intentionally partnering with them to develop policies that center their needs. CLASP is committed to a vision where that culture is dismantled and replaced by one that is inclusive, participatory, and emphasizes authentic partnerships.

As an anti-poverty policy and advocacy non-profit, we understand the phenomenon of racism not only impacts the communities we advocate with and/or for, but also directly impacts how staff of color at CLASP experience our organizational culture, its norms, customs, and perceived values and beliefs. For this reason, we have a vision that requires us to build a culture that centers racial equity and dismantles systems of oppression, both internal and external.

Within the organization this includes:

- ensuring equitable acknowledgment of all communities of color as we think about fostering an inclusive organizational culture,
- seeking to understand issues and challenges from an intersectional approach that centers experiences with race and racism,

- addressing the nature of hierarchical structures and their abilities to limit engagement for staff of color,
- strengthening systems and enhancing transparency to address opportunities for upward mobility for staff of color,
- enhancing transparency and strengthening systems that address the presence of any systemic pay inequities,
- strengthening practices that provide access to social capital, influence, and visibility for staff of color, and
- building restorative justice to address the harm caused by pervasive encounters with microaggressive behavior often experienced by staff of color within work culture.

We believe that to be effective advocates for racial and economic justice, we must not only identify the systemic barriers that contribute and maintain economic and racial injustice, but that we also honor the lived experiences of communities of color in all our policy and advocacy work.

This means that we:

- center and prioritize the knowledge, direction, and guidance of communities of color in how we analyze data and understand our issue and policy areas, and the recommendations we put forward,
- center and intentionally incorporate the lived experiences and perspectives of staff of color in how we identify approaches to our advocacy and technical assistance practices,
- use our voices and social capital to advocate for legislation that aligns with racial equity, while also challenging legislation and the implementation of legislation that work against economic and racial justice,
- build authentic and sustainable relationships with communities, organizers, advocates, and individuals committed to challenging racist policies and programs,
- collaborate with funders and foundations who share our commitment to eradicating both racism and poverty,
- deepen our role of bringing along advocacy partners, public officials, and funders/ foundations who do not yet hold a core commitment to eradicating both racism and poverty,
- uplift opportunities to fight against racism and economic disenfranchisement for communities of color in our external facing reports, writings, and engagements,
- work with policy makers to ensure policy proposals are enacted and implemented to address systemic racism by centering healing, restoration, and liberation, and
- with our deep policy knowledge, and our strategic and technical skills, we strive to ensure that policies are enacted and implemented that center racial equity.

We understand that our vision is aspirational and involves an intentional journey. At CLASP, we believe that large scale change that is implemented and enacted moves the nation towards a transformational vision. We reject the view that there is a conflict between an aspirational and transformative vision and the incremental actions that move towards that vision, but instead believe that the combination delivers change, and that the policy process requires a set of intentional strategies that lead toward sustainable change.

It is our vision that through the above actions, CLASP can play an important role in eradicating poverty and racism.