



Transcript:

Applying a Racial Equity Lens to Our Prevention Work

Presenter: Makani Themba
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PRESENTER: Welcome, everyone. Thanks for joining us today. We're going to begin in just a couple of minutes. We're going to give folks time to get in and get settled.

OK, welcome again, everyone. Thank you for joining us today. Today's webinar is applying a racial equity lens to our prevention work, presented by Makani Themba from Higher Ground Change Strategies. Today's webinar is brought to you by the Great Lakes PTTC. The Great Lakes PTTC is funded by SAMHSA through the following cooperative agreements.

The opinions expressed in today's webinar are those of the speakers and do not necessarily represent the official position of SAMHSA or DHHS. And the Great Lakes PTTC supports the use of affirming language that inspires hope, because language matters and words have power.

So once again, thank you for joining us today. If anyone's having technical issues throughout the webinar, please individually message myself. Kristina Spannauer, or Stephanie Behlman in the chat section, and we'll be happy to help you. Also, since this is a webinar, everyone's cameras will be automatically off and you won't be able to unmute yourself. But please feel free to interact with us and yourselves in the chat section.

We will be using an automated transcription during the webinar today. And please put any questions that you have for the speaker or regarding the content of the webinar in the Q&A section, which is located at the bottom of your screen. We'll be responding to the questions at the end of the presentation that are related to the actual presentation. And if any questions come up in between there that we can answer, we'll be sure to do that as we receive those.

Also, at the end of today's presentation, you'll be redirected to a very brief survey. If you could please take a couple of minutes to fill that out for us, it would be greatly appreciated. That's how we remain accountable and also how we are able to make sure that we have funding for future webinars just like this one. We are also recording today's session, and the recording as well as the PowerPoint slides will be available on the Great Lakes PTTC products and resources website in about two weeks.



And certificates of attendance will also be provided to everybody who attends this whole session in full, and that also takes about two weeks. And you'll receive those by email. Please be sure to follow us on social media. And then I'm going to turn it over to Erin Ficker who is going to introduce us to today's trainer.

ERIN FICKER: Hi, everyone. My name is Erin Ficker, and I'm one of two prevention managers here at the Great Lakes PTTC. And it is my absolute great honor and privilege to introduce to you today our speaker, Makani Themba, who is the chief strategist at Higher Ground Change Strategies. She comes to us today from Jackson, Mississippi, where she is based. She is a social justice innovator and a pioneer in the field of change communications and narrative strategy. She spent more than 20 years supporting organizations, coalitions, philanthropic institutions, in developing high impact change initiatives.

Higher Ground Change Strategies provides her the opportunity to bring her strong sense of history, social justice, and organizing knowledge and deft movement facilitation skills in support of change makers seeking to take their work to the next level. And she's here today to help us understand how we can bring our work to the next level in understanding how we can bring a social justice lens, a racial justice lens, to our prevention work. So we are absolutely honored to have her here So I will stop talking so she can start. Makani, please take it away.

MAKANI THEMBA: Thanks so much, Erin. Good morning to everyone on the air. Joining you from Jackson, Mississippi. In fact, you are in my kitchen. So all my friends, that's where people get to hang out. And if your house is anything like my house, the kitchen is the center, even when you don't expect people to hang out. So here we are. So I know that we're on a webinar, and I can't see you. But I'm hoping I'll get to hear from you in the chat. So I want to encourage you to use the Q&A feature or use the chat to continue the discussion. I actually pay attention to it while I'm speaking. So feel free to be in conversation this way, because I want to hear from you. So there is that, so thank you.

And yes, thank you. I love when people introduce themselves, because this is actually what I really would love for you to do right now is let me know where you're from. If you can just drop in the chat where you're from. We'll see your name, of course. Oh, great, Seattle. We got Wisconsin, New Mexico, all over. OK, Tennessee. All right, I know in Monroe, as I used to live in Detroit. All right, this is great. Thank you. Kingston, Tennessee, all right. Got folks from all over, Miami. I love this.

Welcome, everyone. And one of the things I also encourage folks to do is we're all in this work together, and we're all learning from each other. So please feel free to share, and if you see somebody that you might want to



connect with. And thanks to those folks who are also putting the organization in the chat. I really appreciate that. Thank you. Awesome.

And then the other thing I want to ask you to do before we get started in earnest is to get here. Zoom is an odd thing, because you can be looking at a screen, and your eyeballs are in work, but everything else is doing all the things. And I think I'm pretty famous for that. I can bake a cake and do all the things while on a Zoom webinar. So I'm going to ask you, because these can be complicated issues, they can have a lot of layers for folks, to just take this time, at least in the beginning, to be present, to be here. So for some people, if you are able, that is like having your feet on the ground. Maybe take in a breath.

I know for me, one of the things that's super helpful when I have to sort of move between things, is to just to take a breath and say, I am here. I am here. I am here. And so if that's helpful for you to be here for us to start this conversation about equity, yes, then you might want to do that to yourself, for yourself. And I know for me, I have to say it a couple of times to believe it. It's kind of like clicking your heels. You have to say it three times before you actually go anywhere. So I am here. All right.

So another way I'd love to hear from you is we have a couple of polling questions. And there's no shame-- plus we won't know who answered what, because this is an actual Zoom poll. And so I know we're going to see it on the screen, and I'm going to ask you to participate so we can just know a little bit about who is in the room. So you'll see it up. All right, going for it. You all are quick. Almost there. And yes, welcome to everyone all over the country. Just a few more people. Come on in. Just one click.

All right, so you get to see about half of us are pretty experienced. About half of us are getting our bearings. We got some experts in the place. And we'll probably ask you to see if you have some stories to tell by chat. And we got a few beginners. And welcome all of you, wherever you are. Thank you. Let's do another question real quick. And this will be about our organization. So that was for you. Now, how would you characterize your organization? So let's see if we can get everybody to vote. We had just a few outliers. All right, we're so close. Can we get a few more? All right, still some few stragglers coming in. Almost, almost, almost. So close. A few more folks. Give me just a few more seconds. All right, or not.

Well, let's see what we got. So yeah, about a fifth of the folks in the room, or at least the ones who answered the poll, the vast majority of people answered the polls, say their organization is pretty clear. And so we'll look to hear from you by chat a little bit more about what that means and how you're doing that. A big chunk of you, or organizations, I should say, are either figuring out what it means or building clarity around what it means. And a smaller group in active discussion. So thank you. Thank you for playing along.



All right, we got some Mississippi in the house. There we go. Canton's just down the road from me. I'm in Jackson. Thank you for introducing yourself. So thank you for that. So we are sharing. We shared the results. And I think we shared the results, at least it looked like, right?

PRESENTER: Yes, we did.

MAKANI THEMBA: So now, for some reason, this is still on my screen. So I'm going to get rid of it. And we are going to launch in. So thank you guys for playing along. And again, the folks who said they were experts, I'm looking forward to hearing what you all have to say by chat. So I'm going to share my screen now. Here we go. Here we go and all of the awkwardness there is. There we go. I have a few slides. But again, what's really important to me is how much we can learn from one another through the chat and all of this. So I will present some ideas, tell a couple stories, see where we go, and then see what we can learn and share together.

So here we go, applying a racial equity lens to our work. And change, come on. There we go. So this is our agenda really quick. We did our arriving and checking in and all of those things. We're about to do the overview. We're going to spend a little time, and we'll mostly be in the chat, talking a little bit about practice and some of the things that are coming up for us. And then we'll look directly at the strategic prevention framework or the SPF-- or "spif," as some people call it-- and how to think about equity work in that context. And then the rest of it is really going to be about you and what questions and comments you have. And then we're out. So that's how we're going to rock today.

So I want to start with this pyramid thing. And part of this is about helping us understand where we are as prevention practitioners. And whatever issue we're working on, whether it's tobacco control-- I come out of tobacco control and alcohol policy, that's how I started working in prevention. And then I, at one point, was a director of violence prevention for a county health department. And my very, very, very first prevention work and public health work was actually working on AIDS HIV back in the mid '80s, working with sex workers and other folks and doing that frontline prevention. So I have been around and all those things, doing all of the work that many of you are doing today. So I want you to know that I'm not just talking about this from some high place, but also a person who's been there as a frontline prevention worker, working with young people, working with all kinds of folks across the range. So hopefully this will be relevant to you. And again, we're looking forward to hearing your stories through the chat.

So the meaning of this diagram here is about how many layers there are beneath our issue. So we have our issue. I'll take tobacco control, because that's one that's fairly storied and we know a lot about, or even alcohol, which is also similarly storied. So we have this issue of prevention at the top. And some of us-- I'm sure nobody on this Zoom webinar-- stay right there. Our



focus oftentimes is we're going to try to keep people from misusing. We're going to focus on that. And then there's all these layers underneath that help us understand why does use and prevalence look the way it looks. Why is it difficult for us to move our work or organize the kind of policy resources we need. And so this is a way of representing that. So we have our issue at the top of the iceberg.

But right underneath, we have the current context. Like what are people thinking about this right now, and what is the funding available, and what are the policies that shape our work. And then we have underneath that the history and beliefs people have about that. So coming out of tobacco control back in the day, I think a really fun time, for sure, to be in tobacco control, and when we were really thinking about these deeper layers. Tobacco control started really focused on the smoker and not so much about the industry. And you all know now, because it's been like 40 years, or even longer of this work, where there's more understanding about the role of resources and the role of propaganda and the ways in which, literally, tobacco was integrated into our lives. Where you have cars that have a lighter and an ashtray, but no place to put your purse. What's up with that? And underneath that level of history beliefs, for whatever issue we're working on, there are also power relations. Why is it that way? And how has whatever issue we're working on developed and been framed and reified over time? So it's like who goes to jail, who gets sentenced, all these things are related to that.

And so I think part of it is about how we come to terms with history. I'm going to just check my chat really quick, you all can see, so I can make sure I'm not missing anything. Yep, yep, yep, great, OK. So I think, for some reason, it's taking a minute to load. So I want us to think a minute about what are some of the examples of how our field has exacerbated inequities. And I want to be able to see you. So I'm going to stop this share for a minute so I can see the chat super clearly and ask you if you have some thoughts about that. Do you know or do you think of ways in which our field as prevention has actually exacerbated inequities? And feel free to drop your comments in the chat. The slide isn't showing, OK. Can you hear me though? You can hear me though. So the question is, how has prevention exacerbated-- you can tell I type with one hand-- inequities? Right, that's right. Focusing on individuals instead of structural and systemic issues, yes. Who makes the decisions. Yes, blaming the victim. Yes. Communication not representing all people, right. The way we model, absolutely. Those are all great answers, and I'm sure there will be more. Yes, incarceration rates, in fact. Things like zero tolerance. Right, using behavior as the root cause, exactly.

And that's part of the reason that we think about that pyramid. Because we want to think beneath the issue and behavior. Absolutely, inequity in sentencing. And self-medicating for mental health reasons, but also what we decide is OK as self-medicating. When I was working in alcohol policy, it was so interesting to me when they were putting women in prison and jailing them for using crack and being pregnant, when, actually, the health impacts of



crack use while pregnant did not last as long and were not as devastating as alcohol. And so one of the questions is, why such a higher level of criminalization between alcohol and various forms of cocaine, primarily crack. Right, criminalizing, essentially, what is addiction and despair. So all of these things are some of the ways in which our field has contributed to inequities. Now let's think about how do you think we help? And if you need me to write that in chat, I should. I know there's also closed captioning. But how has prevention helped to address inequity? And I know sometimes it takes a little bit longer.

Yep, bringing to light some of the inequities. Any other thoughts? Yeah, prevention coalitions that bring people to the table. Because here's the cool thing that we know about prevention is that people working together and feeling a sense of agency is actually a protective factor. That is part of what resiliency is about-- agency. Power is important. So the work we do, when we organize, when we make that change, increased knowledge. There we go, learning opportunities. And then also advancing policies that get to root causes.

So I'm going to share again. Thank you for that, Colleen. Make sure that you are choosing panelists and attendees so folks can see it. I'm also repeating some of this, but make sure that little tab at the top where it says "to," yes, make sure that you're including panelists and attendees. So it's like a little arrow. You click it, and you have choices. But let's choose the one "all panelists and attendees" please. That would be great, so then we can all be in the conversation. And if you already sent a chat and didn't use that, go ahead and resend it so everybody can see it. Thank you. Thank you for doing that.

Yes, yes, yes.

Because the work we do to build knowledge, the work we do to engage people and ask the complicated questions about why this is actually helps build power. Helps build power and builds agency. Because one of the things we learned with tobacco control and also in other work was that the more people understood about the environment, the more people understood about the underlying causes and move beyond blaming themselves or blaming the victim, the more agency they had, not only to make different individual choices, but to also engage in the process of change, which I said earlier is also a protective factor.

So when we go back to the slides and hope that they work, because I hear that they're taking a minute to load. Here we go, right window here now. And so this is a great example. I love this. This is happening all over the country where health departments and health institutions are basically talking about racism as a public health crisis and threat, which is also an important work. So we've talked about that.



So I want to talk about what does it look like to do an equity approach and how it's different. So you can do a little comparison here. And you'll get these slides, so you don't have to worry about taking notes. So when we think about our traditional training, as folks talked about in the chat, that the traditional training is that we're single-issued focus, individual behavior, and we think a lot about culture and cultural context, but not as much about some of the socio and economic factors that are broader than behavior, individual, or so-called cultural behavior.

And so because we think of the problem as what people don't know or how they're behaving, then a lot of the programmatic interventions target those affected and it's education. And because we feel, well, it's really about people knowing better, so they'll do better. And then most of the way the resources go to service providers and a lot to researchers to study the problem, because we think information is the answer. And the way we think about delivery is really vertical, and it's short-term and static. We are doing things for people who have problems.

When we think about equity-- so we compare that with a multi-issue focus where we're thinking about the policies and the environmental change and how the context in which we work is shaped by racism and patriarchy and privilege and power. And as folks talk about incarceration rates and even which kids are disciplined at school and expelled, and we know that that has a role in terms of a risk factor for a number of misuse.

And then our primary strategies reflect that. We're organizing. We're trying to shape the public conversation. We're literally engaging in narrative and storytelling and helping people understand some of these inequities and how the policy needs to shift. Like, what's our story around addiction and despair and the fact that so much of the way the country thinks about it is like a personal failing or individual failing, when, what we're learning in the science, is so much more complicated than that.

And then, a lot of times, the work that we need to do or we're trying to pass, we have policymakers who don't necessarily take it as seriously, because they don't perceive the people who are affected to be powerful. So building power is an important strategy in prevention, the organizing work and making sure voices are heard. So we're investing in power building. We're investing in structural change. We're investing in advocacy. And we're investing in different kinds of research, not just on prevalence, but thinking about what are the power relations and what are the history in how resources are allocated, and what do we need to know to change the environment. And hopefully you can see that.

And then the way we think about support is more circular. It's like we're learning from each other. Everybody's an expert. It's not a top-down approach. But we recognize everybody has something important to bring to the table and that we're talking about long-term work together, as opposed to



these short-term things. And I know sometimes, or most of the time, the funding cycles don't necessarily support that.

And so one of the things that's important to recognize is that we do have a lot of science on our side. And so we have folks who are thinking about what actually works in prevention. So what we do know is that increased capacity at the local level, this organizing work, better policy environment, it reduces risk. Increasing public awareness and strengthening social and political infrastructure, that only helps us have stronger prevention initiatives, because the resources are there, and we have public policy that aligns and supports our work. But that actual advocacy work literally lowers risk. The act of working together, of finding their voices. Because lack of agency and powerlessness is a really important risk factor for use. So it works on both the individual and the structural level.

And I know many of you are familiar with this, but just to repeat, is that social determinants are important, and housing, education, equality. Equality, actually, is the most important. And I'm going to stop sharing, because I want to be back in the conversation with you by chat. That equality is, actually according to the research, the most important factor around social determinants and better health outcomes. And it's not even being rich, that as folks might think, well, you have more money, and that, of course, helps to have resources.

But we've also seen, when we look at things disaggregated by race, that many of the things that you might think would be lower in risk, because you have more resources-- for example, infant mortality. We find that black women who have resources, graduate degrees, a level of affluence, still have very high rates of infant mortality because of the allopathic load, the sheer stress of what it's like to be a woman and black in this society. And the research, there's no arguing with it. It's super clear that that's the case. So social determinants are critical, but this issue of equality, even in places where everybody is pretty low income, that if there is equality in a sense of agency, that there's higher and better health outcomes. So that's important. So I want to stop a minute and see if there's any questions or comments. And some of the folks who are like the OG experts who are on the poll, if you had some thoughts about your own experience in terms of how you're working with this, I'd love to hear it in the chat. And I know people are typing.

One of the things that I think about when I think about the issue of social determinants as really important-- and this is when I was working with high school kids-- was just how critical stability in housing is to folks' health and well-being and choices. I worked in a school district many years ago where 75%, 75% of the families that started school in the fall would be in a different school by the end of the year. And you think, what does that mean in terms of what we know about stability and connection as protective factors. Yes, and the prompt again is just your experiences, in terms of how you've been incorporating equity in your own work and in social determinants you made. I



know there's a number of folks working on, for example, affordable housing as a prevention strategy. So how are some of the ways you're incorporating equity in how you're improving health outcomes in your work?

That is exactly right. Being unhoused, it's really hard when you don't have a roof over your head to focus on recovery or prevention. Yes. Thank you, Erin, because I am a very slow typer.

And then the other thing, too, I want to invite is also if you have questions. If there's something you're dealing with in your environment that you have a question about, I'm here for that, too. So questions and anything you'd like to share about your own experiences incorporating equity in your work.

And if there are none, but I have a feeling folks do have some experiences they can share. I'll just give it another second before we keep rolling. Oh, thank you. And I think this is a great point about working with immigrant communities. My family is Caribbean on one side, my mom's side, and my dad's from the South. And so there is this thing, all this protective factor that comes from people being tight knit and close and connected. And then what we see is it erodes as folks become more and more quote unquote "acculturated." And so the work is how do you support that and also the stress of what it's like to relocate and engaged in what Mindy Full of Love calls rude shock, when you leave or you're dislocated. Because their people have their stories about how they came here, and it's important.

I was doing some work in Indianapolis, visiting. I wasn't living there. And I was working with mostly Mexican and Central American immigrants. And it was so interesting the layers, because the way that folks were thinking about prevention there is they just had this one big bucket that was Latinx, and that was it. And so they weren't really paying attention to the different layers of, not only where people were from in terms of different parts of the country and in different countries, but also the different political and class interface.

So you had folks who were in the city from Peru who had come with resources who were part of an elite who had migrated as part of an agreement with the US government with their government, because they were powerful. And their government had been ousted. And then with the resources that they had, they bought apartment buildings. And they had all these properties that then folks who were Mexican immigrants who had come essentially as workers to the city, were renting and not great conditions. And so the way that prevention folks were thinking about this is they were lumping the more affluent folks who came from this Peruvian elite class in the same bucket, trying to do the same work, and engage the same way as the folks who were Mexican immigrants who were seasonal workers moving back and forth. And, of course, it was not successful.

So one of the things that's important is a lot of times when we think about equity is also to be paying attention to age, youth, nationality, which is different than these big ethnic buckets we tend to work with, and conditions.



And thank you about that. So, yes, youth voice, that's important. Thank you for that. That's very important how we make sure that our work is led by the people it's for and shaped by the people it's for. Thank you for that. Yes, let's go with the Q&A question, thank you.

ERIN FICKER: Jacob has an interesting comment as well, if you see that. Do you want me to go ahead and read that for you?

MAKANI THEMBA: Yes, well, you know what? Can we start with the question while I'm reading?

ERIN FICKER: Yep. There's a question further up that I was--.

MAKANI THEMBA: OK, maybe you should read it for me, because I'm scrolling, and I can't--.

ERIN FICKER: OK, it's going a little fast, which is great.

MAKANI THEMBA: Yes, it is great.

ERIN FICKER: So Colleen just asked that's such an important point about agency and powerlessness, is there a good video or campaign we could use to educate folks about the role in powerlessness/agency in improving health outcomes? So that was the question.

MAKANI THEMBA: Yes, and I finally got to scroll up to it. Thank you, Colleen. So that's a great question. And actually, there are quite a lot of resources. And what we'll do is make sure to send a list. So the group that I had pictured, Freedom Inc, which is actually based out of Madison, Wisconsin-- I saw there's a few Wisconsin people in the house-- they have some excellent resources, especially around also gender, because they do a lot of work on domestic violence prevention. So they're a great resource.

There's some others, Community Coalition out of Los Angeles. So we'll make sure to get you a list. And what's great is some of these videos are made by young people themselves. So they're an excellent tool to share with young people. And then some of these are more intergenerational. Yes, thank you for that, Kristina. So we'll make sure to have the resources and post it. And I'll put them in there.

And I actually have a list, not only of videos, but of data and studies. Some of the studies that I'm not necessarily citing, but some of them are in the slide as footnotes, which you'll see. But some of the videos I'm thinking about, they may not be on the website. But they are on YouTube, and I'll make sure that you have the link. So that's super important. So thank you for that question. We'll make sure and pull that together.



And what's great is, because now video production is so low cost compared to what it was 40 years ago where people were like, I got to buy a camera. And I'm old enough to remember when I first got a camera on my phone, and I'm like, why would I have a camera on my phone? What's the purpose of that? And here we are. And I was a person who loved photography. I still love my camera. I walked around with an old Nikon camera. I was like, this phone is never going to take pictures I'm going to care about. But here we are. I don't even use my camera anymore.

So let's see. I'm scrolling to see, but I think we might keep moving, unless there's other--.

ERIN FICKER: Jacob just made a comment about some of his work, saying that providing supports beyond direct programming to youth, having relationships with parents, providing information and access to resources to support their housing, mentoring youth and connecting them with college resources, bus passes, and providing transportation at times, is some of the work that he's doing.

MAKANI THEMBA: Thank you for that. I appreciate that, Jacob. I think what folks are finding out, in terms of best practices around youth-led and youth-focused work is that we have to do that. I actually did a study, which cannot be published, because it was done privately for a foundation, but I can share this about it. I talked to about 50 youth organizing groups around the country. And one of the things that was super clear is how important it is to have the infrastructure to support folks to show up. It's not enough to be like, we're going to have pizza, as important as that is. Pizza's critical to our organizing work on so many levels. But this idea of really paying attention to-- and I love this, Jacob, what you were talking about, because I'm familiar with a couple of the people on here that I know you do similar things-- is paying attention to people's whole lives. What are they showing up with?

And what a number of groups are doing, when they have the resources, is actually having social workers on their staff and actually organizing their prevention work, a piece of it, as casework. Because folks have so much going on. And boy, if we thought there was a lot going on before the pandemic, baby, we are in a period now where many of our families are in real distress. Real distress. Folks have lost jobs. They've lost income. Where I live in Jackson, we had the twin pandemics, I guess, of not only COVID, but a real spike in homicide rates. It was just so intense.

And I spent three months coming out of retirement. For some people who don't know, a big part of my practice and work is communications and narrative change. And so the city of Jackson asked me to come in for three months to basically be interim communications director for the city. And I tell you, to go to some of these places where we had to have mobile coolers, there was so much death between the shootings and the COVID victims as



the country and everyone was trying to get a hold of what the practice was for treatment and the treatment protocols.

And then what we find is it goes together, what we already know. What we already know in theory we got to see play out in COVID where, when people weren't able to go to work and the level in almost all of the violence that we were experiencing were between people who knew each other well. Between people who knew each other well. So as we think about, what does it mean to practice equity and prevention in these times, there's even more to do around how we're paying attention to people's context, what they're living through and also the material needs.

We often find-- I know that many of you find-- we have young people who haven't eaten when they come to our programs. We have young people who have never been taught to read well, all these things. And then we also have a high number of folks with mental health challenges, because of the times and because of the kinds of experiences, whether it's their migration story or the way in which they're dealing with gender and gender equity.

Or they're trying to figure out things about, in terms of what's our space, how queer is our space, how welcoming is our space for folks who are queer and exploring and trying to understand where they are in relationship to gender, which is a growing issue in our youth work. In fact, it probably isn't growing. It was always there. But I think we're trying to develop better and more effective tools to create affirming spaces for that and what that means, because that's important.

And I think there's also tools out there. One of the things we'll share is there's a racial equity tools which is a huge, mega website. It's like Amazon without the jacked up compensation issues of racial equity tools. And I'm sure somebody will drop the link in the chat, and I will, too. But that has just about everything. And you can search. Look at that. Like magic. Thank you, Stephanie. Making it work.

If there's no other questions that I missed, because I was trying to pay attention, then I'm going to go back to the slideshow. I'm going to share my screen again. And I was trying to explain Erin how this was going to work. It's like, you don't have a lot of slides. I'd go like, it's going to be OK. Trust me. We're going to keep on going back and forth. So just a little bit more before we stop. There we go. OK, so I'll make this small.

So I love this quote-- and let's see if I can move this down here, there we go-- by Iris Marian Young, who is now an ancestor. But she wrote this incredible book called *Justice and the Politics of Difference* that, I think for our work, and I'll make sure that people have it. And I may have the title transposed a little bit. But I'll make sure we have the correct title and all the information. So I love this. "If one thinks about racism by examining only one wire of the cage, one form of disadvantage, it's difficult to understand how and why the bird is



trapped. Only a large number of wires arranged in a specific way, connected to one another, serve to enclose the bird and to ensure that it cannot escape." So this goes into this thing what the folks call intersectionality or the way all kinds of inequities intersect, whether it's class, which partially is created by racism and gender, like women not being paid equitably. People of color not being paid equitably. Folks losing their land and instability. The kinds of things that happen with gentrification when people have dislocated and can't afford to live where they were born and raised. And so all of these things are a range. And part of our job in thinking about equity and prevention is to look at all the wires. To look at all the wires.

And so thinking about this sort of cage, or this way in which things are arranged, means that part of our work is, first of all, is to make these systems and these processes in these ways visible. Who is behind all this? What structures are behind all this? And what I found in my own prevention work is that people actually get excited about this, because they love to know that it's bigger than them, that there's something about that context.

It's like you imagine taking a picture, and you're doing a close up, and someone's coughing. And you're like, oh, that person's coughing. Or maybe someone's stumbling. And that person is stumbling. And then depending on who they are, you might say, well, maybe they're drunk or whatever. And then you pull the camera lens back, and you see, oh, wow, it's really rocky where they're walking. No wonder they're stumbling. I would stumble, too.

And so that thing of pulling the camera lens back and seeing what is this environment, what is this terrain, how are we understanding where we are right now, that's critical. And one of the tools that we use to do that in this, and in terms of thinking about environmental factors, because we want to identify, but also figure out policies that help hold decision makers accountable and shift the environment.

So many of you are familiar with the four P's. We try to do prevention work that affects Place, Product, Price, and Promotion. And by that, for folks who are unfamiliar, you think about-- let's take tobacco control, because that's an obvious one. So we think about where is it sold and how accessible is it and all of that. And what interventions can we make to make it less accessible. And then there's the different kinds of products. So there's a whole campaign that's been going on for decades to try to ban flavoring in tobacco, like menthol and things like that. And think about how does changing the product shift and make it less likely that folks will use it or for young people to use or things like that. And they attack around that. So things like flavored wrappers for cigar, which cigars are just mostly used to hollow out for bones. But there are folks who then move, literally, from marijuana to tobacco, because of that. And then price. What can we do to raise the price to make it more costly, because what we know is that price is probably one of the most sensitive factors, in terms of getting people to stop use. And then promotion, looking at how things are promoted. How they're engaged. I did quite a bit of work in



food policy when I was at The Praxis Project and access to junk food. And you think about what corner stores look like and how much companies like McDonald's or Coke promote their products, promote their products to young people.

And then this fifth P that I've added is Predatory in a sense that many companies have different strategies, marketing strategies, in terms of place, product, price, promotion, for different communities. And that, oftentimes, in communities of color and even for youth, that these are predatory practices that are not matched in what they do for white communities, oftentimes, and more affluent communities. So paying attention to the whole range of factors. And then to figure out how to address those. There are lots of great policy models available. I know that PTTC has it and other folks have these tools that are available to help folks think about that. And we're going to get more into the SBF in a second. Like right now, bam, here we are at the SBF.

I'm just going to check the chat real quick, which you will see me do. Yes, liquor stores, absolutely. One of the kinds of work I did early on was actually about liquor store over-concentration and how that was a direct result of federal policies. You can grow up and think, well, man, there must be all these liquor stores here, because people just drink a lot in my community, when it just wasn't true. Literally, what was happening was that the Small Business Administration, when folks were coming into the country, and they were offering them capital as part of their resettlement packages. And folks from particular countries who had a certain kind of status, because of the relationship between the US government and the government where they were coming from. And so the SBA actually encouraged a number of new residents to-- and I see your hand, Colleen, and I'll get in just a second-- to actually take their SBA loans and invest in liquor stores, because they knew that they would get their loans paid back.

And this is a matter of evidence, data. There's work by James Mosher and other folks that was done in the '80s and early '90s that actually document this. So I think that's a great example. But when we look at it, we'll look at the environment and think, oh, this is because of consumption patterns, when the combination of those policies plus land use and planning policies, in terms of which communities ended up being mixed zone-- mostly communities of color, low income communities-- versus which communities became residential only, which were more affluent.

So I'm going to come off the share before we go in here just so I can really see your questions. The hand raising was an accident. OK, thank you. This is why. This is why. OK, I'm going to go back, because I do want to quickly do this SPF thing, talk about that before we close.

So I think most of you are familiar with the Strategic Prevention Framework. We've got sustainability and cultural competence is in the center to be woven through. But basically, we're thinking about assessment, how we understand



capacity based on the data, based on what we're learning. Then we plan. Then we implement. Then we see if we did what we said we were going to do. So that's pretty straightforward.

Now, of course, they say, and make sure you have some equity in there. So what we want to talk about next really quickly and then get into your questions, because that's where it all really goes, is what does it look like to apply an equity lens in that strategic prevention framework. I'm going to need to drink some water. Here we go. So we think about how we understand the problem. This is a really important place to begin our equity frame and our equity lens, because as the famous saying goes, if they get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about the answers. And that, a lot of times, we think about assessment as prevalence.

And so part of what it means as we've been talking about throughout the conversation today is that we've got to start with the lens pulled back. How do we understand, what are we actually assessing? Are we assessing prevalence and folks' behaviors? Are reassessing where do they live, what are the conditions? And how do we understand what's happened? What's been the history of agency, not just problems, but also how do we understand the assets? And what is working? What is strong? What is helpful? What is resilient? And not just resilient, because resilient often means in relationship to a problem. I'm resilient. But what's powerful?

And then when we think about capacity and readiness, a lot of times we're assuming-- I'm sure nobody on this Zoom, maybe a couple of people, who knows-- that we're assuming that wherever we're going, the people aren't ready. Because we have an idea of what readiness means. When it may be us that's actually not ready. It's like, what do we really know about the history of where we are and what folks are organizing and changing and doing? And what's important?

And what does capacity mean? Is it really just a matter of resources? Do they already know what's going on, and they have ideas? So we have an opportunity to also incorporate equity into how we think about our capacity, and what is capacity. Like agency, like organizing, like the institutions that hold people, like faith communities, and others.

And then when we think about what works and what we do, sometimes what we have to do is move out of traditional prevention so-called best practices and look at what are policy change best practices. What is coalition building best practices? And a lot of that work is in community psychology, as it's called, or political science and other areas that are looking at these relationships. And so we want to broaden our understanding of that. We want to look at the case studies that people have written about, about the organizing work and how folks have made actual change in their environment. And how that then comes back and blossoms into the kind of traditional prevention outcomes.



And then implementation is another big one. And it's the place where usually people are into it, that's usually where they start, even though we want to actually put equity throughout in our assessments, the questions, who we ask, all of that. And our capacity, understanding readiness, as a matter of also agency and building power and how people are coming together. So it's also about our readiness to do the work that needs to be done.

But part of this implementation is like, who is really best to implement the project? What does our staff look like? Are we trying to listen to community, because we're not a part of it, and so we have to do all of this? And let me be clear, just because you live a place doesn't mean you know everything. So you still need to do assess and the capacity and planning work, even if you live in a place, because there's always something more to know. But if you look around, and your work is to work in a community, and you don't have anyone on your team that is part of it, then there are questions to ask. Who is best to really implement this? How do we engage?

And this includes youth organizing. Is there room to at least stipend or support young people and to create a pipeline for them to go from being youth organizers to, essentially, staff? In fact, some of the best organizations, and Community Coalition is a great example of that, as well as Freedom Inc. and some of the groups that we've named, where young people literally move from being volunteers to being paid organizers. And many of those folks, in terms of the directorship, they started off as organizers who have been directors, which I think is awesome.

And that is also part of how we think about power and equity in the implementation. Do you have an advisory group that actually helps make decisions about this, or are you trying to do this in a room by yourself? And evaluation, too. It's like, what is success? How is it measured? Who informs that measure? That's the importance of having formal advisory roles and staff, people who are paid to be a part of it as part of the budget. And who controls the story.

I'm going to look at the chat. Come on. Yes, absolutely, cultural humility versus cultural competence. Yes, and that's important. And also, it's important that both, frameworks cultural humility and cultural competence, assume an outsider lens. They both assume an outsider lens. And so what's important is to think about what does this look like if we have people who are inside, who are literally steeped in it, who can tell you the story and the work? And that's not to say that you can't do work if you've never been a person like- - there's all kinds of things we can do. We have empathy, cultural humility, study, engagement, listening. That's what good organizers do. But if we do have an opportunity to have the kind of diversity that reflects back to the communities that their folks are here, there's a level of trust, oftentimes, a level of engagement, there's a level of knowledge that is important and that enriches our work.



I was doing a similar talk to a regional gathering of prevention practitioners. And one of the folks shared a story about how they were just completely shocked and amazed that they had a Black friend who literally went to the police and was introducing themselves and their family to the police to make sure that they weren't shot or that their son wasn't shot by the police. They wanted the police in their community to know who they were.

And what was interesting was that this person felt like they had discovered some secret thing that literally Black people had been doing for a while and that there's a whole lot of conversation about, like the talk, as they say. And then this engagement with trying to figure out-- I mean, I have friends here who, literally, they buy a new car, they go to the police and say, this is me, this is my car, this is really my car. Please don't harass me. They don't actually all live in Jackson. They live right outside of Jackson in Madison, which is kind of notorious in its history what they used to call a sundown town, that black people weren't allowed there after dark until like maybe 50 years ago or something like that.

So here's this thing where she thought she was discovering something that literally millions of people were engaged in it. And so that is the beauty of what you get when you have people on your team who already know. You get to learn, and you get to have people who operate with that knowledge. Because that knowledge is not something that you can get, definitely not in this session. We're almost over. This is something that's acquired through experience and listening over years.

And even if you are the person in the community, like you lived in the community and you're doing this work, it's still a different perspective. Doing this work, even with your family, think about your conversations with your own family and how weird and wonky they can be about your work. Sometimes they don't even understand what you do. And sometimes you get frustrated even trying to explain it at times. And so that is just an example of what it looks like, even if you're steeped in community, to engage.

So I know we have a question. And I want to get to it. And so I just want to just do this real quick so that we have this. So some of the tools, one-to-ones with community people and some of the other listening tools that we can do. There's even resources where you can do big games, games that you can play and all kinds of fun things. Hire staff, we're talking about, that comes from the community in which you work in.

Recognize and integrate community assets. So that means that in the assessment, you're asking about what people think is strong and great about where they live and what kind of work and changes they've made to understand capacity. There's always someone in the community with skills. Always. And have advisory boards and partnerships. And really try to make sure, as you're writing your grants, you're thinking about this-- how do you



spread the resources? Pizza is great. Pizza and getting paid is even better. And then identifying measures of success in collaboration with your community partners.

And another thing, which is important, developing communication strategies that center communities telling their own stories about that, about what happened, and how they worked, for folks to claim and get that sense of pride from the changes, because this was the work that they did. And I think it's, again, important to know the history to understand what's up.

So I'm going to stop the share. And I know we had something in the Q&A. Oh, it's gone? OK. And then I'm going to look at the chat. But this is really your time. We have about 10 minutes left. I think there might be a few announcements. So see if you have any questions or comments, because that was a lot to absorb.

ERIN FICKER: So we have about 15 minutes where we can just take questions, comments. And you can put those in the Q&A. And if you have comments, those can go in the chat. If you have questions, we ask you put those in the Q&A so we can make sure that we get to all of them and don't lose them in the chat. But really, take this time to use the expertise that we have with Makani today.

All right, so while people are preparing their questions or their comments, and I really, really would love to hear from the folks who, again, who are doing this work, as well as the folks who are trying to figure it out.

ERIN FICKER: I want to just say one of the things I think that you touched on really well in that last site is really focusing on in that assessment, making sure you're not just assessing data and not just assessing use patterns and those kinds of things. But really assessing the capacity of the community and the assets of the community, making sure you're understanding what they have and what's possible. So I think that's an important piece that's often lost when we go through this process. So I'm glad that you touched on that and thought about that and shared that with us, because it's so often lost.

MAKANI THEMBA: Absolutely, thank you for that. And I also want to lift up. There's been so much work on asset-based mapping, even though I don't like the word mapping, because we don't always know the relationship of one thing to another when we're just starting to work with communities. So I like inventory better. Because the list doesn't say, well, this is related to that and this goes-- but there's a lot of great resources.

And one of the things that I find to be a fun exercise is, when we're all back in person, but you can actually do this using a Jamboard or a Google Doc virtually, is to have folks literally-- you can have a large a Google sheet with maybe an asset on the top like, I can speak in a language other than English, or all kinds of things that you can brainstorm that work. And then have people



literally go around writing what assets they have and getting a dot or something or a little star for each sheet that they put something on, so they can feel like, oh, I have a lot of assets. And I find that people really like that. And this is also something where gender comes in, as well. Because a lot of times, when we're doing grassroots work, a lot of the work that women traditionally do gets disappeared in how we think about assets. So the folks who do tremendous child care and who would be willing to hold that down for meetings, and we don't usually ask about that. But all the debt care work is also super important in how we build community and recognizing and honoring people who do it.

It looks like we got Q&As now.

ERIN FICKER: Yeah, we've got three great questions. And I want to make sure that get to each one of them.

MAKANI THEMBA: I'm ready.

ERIN FICKER: So it looks like we have four now. But I want to make sure we get to them, because they are all really great questions. So the first one is, what is the best way to reach a community that has never had prevention? There is a low reporting among youth due to shame and stigma. There isn't enough data specific to this population and student survey reports low numbers. But in all reality, we know there is an issue.

MAKANI THEMBA: There's no such thing as a community that has no history of prevention. There's no such thing. And I know that that seems weird or wild to say. But let's think about what prevention actually is. It's when people support you, stand in the gap, help you figure things out, help you make different decisions. That is happening everywhere. Now, our job is to figure out where, even if the data doesn't capture it. That's why we have to do the one-on-ones.

And we have to ask the questions so that people actually recognize the work they do. Because sometimes we get caught up in the nomenclature and the technical terms that people don't recognize what they're actually doing. But their is somebody's mama who's out there making breakfast for folks so their not hungry. There's somebody out there who is paying attention to kids and looking out the window as they're playing on the street and being like, hey, hey, nah, nah, nah, don't do that.

So then the question is-- and this is why asset mapping is so critical and also getting out of the box with it is so critical-- is we have to ask ourselves when we think about capacity and readiness, what is going on right now? And so I hope that's helpful. But the one-on-ones are going to be critical. Because also, there's communities, they are closed. There's shame, but also it's sort of like, who are you, I don't know you, why would I tell you what's going on. And as someone who's done a lot of work in Indian country, it's a thing. It takes



some time. But you know what the shortcut is? Finding the three people who actually know what's going on, giving them some resources in helping you figure out how to crack the code.

So I know we got more questions.

ERIN FICKER: And sometimes, in my experience, it's having someone ask the questions other than yourself. Having someone else go, a trusted elder in the community, or a trusted person in the community, doing that other than yourself and finding that information.

MAKANI THEMBA: And knowing the language. Because language is about pictures. It's not about words. We say the words to generate the picture. But if there's no picture associated with the word you're using, no one will understand you. So that's part of it.

ERIN FICKER: That's great. OK, so the next question is from Christine. Any practical tips on how to get BIPOC, Black, Indigenous, People of Color—

MAKANI THEMBA: I know what BIPOC stands for.

ERIN FICKER: I was just doing it for everybody else.

MAKANI THEMBA: Oh, for everyone. I'm sorry, that's right. Yes.

ERIN FICKER: --engaged with our coalitions. It hasn't been a priority for our coalitions, and I'm trying to motivate them in that direction. So it sounds like, and correct me if I'm wrong in the chat, please, but it sounds like motivating the coalition to engage with Black, Indigenous, People of Color and get them involved in the coalition. So it sounds like they're trying to motivate the coalition. So any practical tips on that?

MAKANI THEMBA: Yeah, that is a challenge that is happening all over the place. Some of that's about comfort and fear. And also, coalitions become places-- they become like our work family. People are like, I just want to hang out with you and get my hugs and all of that. So it's a thing. But so I think part of it is, what are the opportunities to do some work around white supremacist culture? And there are great tools. It's not something I suggest that you [AUDIO OUT]. It's something you need to ease in with some support from people who know what they're doing. Because it could be like trying to make an omelet with a hammer. You want to make sure you have some good support around it.

Because you also don't want to invite people into a coalition where, if folks are resistant, that might be a hostile environment. So how do you work with people, also? But also, how do you set a standard and say, these are our values. Don't we have inclusive values? And if we have inclusive values, here's some things we have to do. Like, how can we not do this?



And sometimes what makes sense, and this is a matter of self-determination, what some folks do is, literally, they have different coalitions to begin with, because it's important to engage with folks. And so maybe what the on ramp is, is that their safe space for BIPOC, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or whatever the specific set of folks that you're working with, because chances are, it's not BIPOC, but it might be. And that is also a successful strategy. But you want to bring people together, but you also want to have these spaces where, say, folks are all like immigrants from the Philippines, and they want to get together and cook food and laugh and tell stories and also engage in a particular kind of way.

That doesn't mean that you never have that group come together. You want them to come together. You want them to build together. You want to have interpretation so that everybody can fully participate. And I think what's a great best practice-- and I want to stop talking about it, I need to say this-- is that to make sure everyone has to have interpretation, so we can all feel it and know what it's like. So, again, working with folks around their own culture and why do they feel that way, developing on ramps for folks to have safe spaces to work it out before they come into a hostile environment, and then, with some skill and facilitation, bring people together based on a set of shared values and a commitment to justice and equity. All right, next question.

ERIN FICKER: Great, I just put a note in the chat for you there. So I want to get to the next question, because I think it's really important, and we're getting tight on time here. So do you feel like waiting for people within the community to reach out is a better strategy than going in and deciding to help perceived issues? What to avoid, the "savior" aspect of prevention?

MAKANI THEMBA: Yes

[OVERLAPPING VOICES]

MAKANI THEMBA: That's a great thing. I think it's good. Again, I think outreach is good. The best outreach is not with a specific idea, though. That's where the assessment comes in. You shouldn't be like, what's going on with y'all and marijuana use, or here's this thing, I want to hear more about that. But like you're saying, this open assessment like, so what's up. What are the things that you care about, and how do they relate? And that's definitely how I had to do my tobacco control work. As bad as an issue it was, we didn't have a lot of folks who were being like, yo, I really need to figure out how to deal with tobacco right now. But we were able to figure out what was the overlapping thing. And that is what I call a fulcrum intervention, something that lifts several issues at the same time, including your own, but addresses community needs. And so that's what we really want to go for.

ERIN FICKER: That's great. That's very helpful. Thank you. And then the last question we have-- and we have one minute left, so no pressure-- we don't



have a youth advisory group of our own, but we want to approach an organization that has a youth group and ask if we could borrow them for a specific purpose, review prevention materials, or make a video. Is that ethical? It seems like a shortcut, but better than nothing.

MAKANI THEMBA: Well, I think it's totally fine to go work with existing partners. In fact, that is a smart strategy. The key is compensation and that they are a partner. I don't think it's fair to do it any other way. But yes. It's great to work with groups, just like any other coalition. And just because they're a youth coalition doesn't mean that you don't treat them like any other group that you would work with, including resources. Hopefully that means resources. Let me not say that. Resources are critical. Thank you.

ERIN FICKER: That's great. That's great, and that was our last question, and it is exactly at time. I don't know that that's ever happened. I want to just take a minute to thank you so much for sharing your incredible wisdom with us all. Thank you so, so much. Thank you all, all of the attendees that have been with us today that shared their knowledge and information and engaged in this great dialogue with us and spending an hour and a half with us. This has been an amazing experience. I have learned a lot, and I hope that you have had an opportunity to learn a lot as well.

So thank you so much. And please know that you will receive a short survey afterwards. Please take the time to fill that out. It helps us immensely. Thank you so much.

MAKANI THEMBA: Awesome. Thank you.

ERIN FICKER: Thank you all.

MAKANI THEMBA: Have a great day.