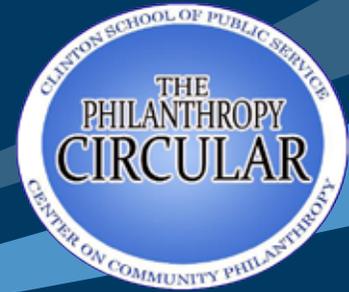


# Second Annual Racial Healing & Equity SUMMIT



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
Clinton School  
of Public Service

## PATHWAYS TO RACIAL HEALING AND EQUITY IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH: A COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY STRATEGY

The second annual summit, **Pathways to Racial Healing and Equity in the American South: A Community Philanthropy Strategy**, was hosted March 29th and 30th by Clinton School of Public Service's Center on Community Philanthropy. Led by Dr. Charlotte Williams, Associate Professor of Leadership and Director of the Center on Community Philanthropy, the Center convened over 150 individuals representing local organizations, leaders, and community members to learn about and analyze racial inequality.

The keynote speaker, and the Center's "Scholar in Residence," was **john a. powell**, Executive Director of the Haas Center of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of California Berkeley.

Professor powell's research has enhanced the understanding that racism is not always

deliberate. It is, in fact, often unconscious, and Professor powell points out that racialized structures, not people, distribute opportunity unequally. To that end, he has developed an "opportunity-based" framework for thinking about how an individual's destiny is affected by a complex and interconnected web of opportunity structures that significantly affect their quality of life.



## How Does Race Work in the 21st Century?



Professor John A. Powell explains that the difference between the past understanding of race and its modern incarnation is we previously looked for the “single cause, or the thing, rather than focus on the relationships”

between all of the factors that make up systems in our society. Systems in our society produce and reproduce racialized outcomes through the organization of institutional structures. Professor Powell recognizes that we often want to look at individual effort or feel like there should be someone to blame, but “often times it’s not someone, it’s something, i.e. a structure, a mechanism, a policy, not just an individual.”

Professor Powell further adds that people are “situated differently” in our structures and that social inequality is a result of certain people being segregated from opportunity, as well as subconscious bias. Subconscious biases are involuntary thoughts and feelings developed by social cues and structures. However, Professor John A. Powell is optimistic because he believes that the subconscious is malleable and can be altered, not by logical facts and figures, but by telling stories and making positive associations that create an empathetic space to see one another as human.

Race is often a confusing topic, and Professor Powell highlights the contradictions of race in the 21st century: “how can we have President Obama in the White House and have the injustice of Trayvon Martin happen at the same time?” Professor Powell insists addressing these contradictions means working to alter the systems and subconscious biases that predictably produce and reproduce racialized outcomes and exclaims, “we must make the structures reflect the values we have.”

## Participant Perspectives on Structural Inequality

During the summit, participants broke into groups to reflect on their own experiences with racial equity and social structures. The following are some of the highlights from these powerful, thought-provoking conversations:

- Participants agreed that work needed to be done to create more equitable structures, but also felt that white people and people of color view institutional racism differently.
- Participants felt that people need to work to change other’s hearts and minds, in addition to creating more equitable policy. They also believed that making these changes requires getting those who will prioritize racial justice into positions of power.

- Participants felt that individuals must work to counter the prominent narrative in our society. They identified storytelling as a powerful tool to reform the status quo by humanizing one another and providing holistic pictures of why more equitable structures are needed.

**• Participants felt we must work to counter the prominent narrative in our society.**

## Promoting Racial Healing through Community Philanthropy

Harrison, Arkansas and Mobile, Alabama provide concrete examples of how communities can enact community philanthropy strategies to focus on using local resources to make positive change. Community philanthropy is a tool to organize a community's time, talent, and treasure to eliminate disparity and create positive community change. The communities of Harrison and Mobile have been using community philanthropy strategies to disarm racism by creating initiatives focusing on social inclusion and racial justice. Both communities are having difficult, but purposeful conversations centering on racial healing and equity.

In Arkansas, Harrison residents Carolyn Cline, Patty Methvin, and Layne Ragsdale, sit on the Harrison Task Force on Race Relations to provide a voice against historical biases and take a stand on current racism. The Task Force works to act with respect and civility, to publically denounce racism, and to prepare its community to deal with race

relations. The Taskforce has undertaken a variety of initiatives including a MLK Nonviolence Youth Summit, a Silence no More website, an Affirmation of Wholeness Pledge, a Youth Diversity Council, and a city council resolution denouncing discrimination.

In Alabama, Mobile residents have organized Mobile United to compose a film series that prompts their community to identify, discuss, and explicitly address issues of racial inequality. The film hopes to talk about race in a non-aggressive "way that can be heard" as a means to help people come together across racial lines. The group is organizing their time, talent, and treasure to utilize media as a tool to bring racial history and modern race relations to the forefront of our social conversations and are using the films as starting points for community wide-conversations on race.



*From left to right: Patty Methvin, Carolyn Cline, and Layne Ragsdale of the Harrison Task Force on Race Relations; UACS Associate Dean Susan Hoffpauir served as the panel moderator*



*From left to right: Dr. Joel Lewis, Dr. Robert Gray, Martha Vignes, and Merceria Ludgood of Mobile United*

## Equity and Systemic Change

Many institutions have social justice values, but the Arkansas Cradle to Prison Pipeline Initiative; UALR's African American Male Initiative and Institute on Race and Ethnicity; the NAACP; and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation work to ensure their organizations go beyond mere values and embrace strategies for racial equity. University of Arkansas at Little Rock Chancellor, Joel Anderson, believes that when dealing with racial disparities, "You have to face it to fix it," and this means developing ways to support racial justice, connect to others, innovate, and apply these innovations in communities and institutions.

Chancellor Joel Anderson, Beverly Divers-White, Harvell Howard, Regan Gruber-Moffitt, and Todd Moore each work with organizations that embrace, support, and empower those from marginal backgrounds. Their organizations directly confront the role race plays in social inequity, question how to improve systems, and work to ensure that people within

these systems benefit equally from systematic changes. One strategy highlighted by these experts is to connect efforts across institutions—by working together we can empower a critical mass of our population, improve the opportunities for people of color, and ensure systems work for everyone equitably.



*From left to right: Harvell Howard, Regan Gruber-Moffitt, and Todd Moore; Clinton School student Jordan Aibel served as the panel moderator*