

CIVIC LEARNING THROUGH A LENS OF RACIAL EQUITY

Gene Corbin, Christina Santana, William Cortezia and John Reiff

Abstract

This article argues that current approaches to civic learning tend to normalize Whiteness. It describes how a team in Massachusetts developed a framework for civic learning through a lens of racial equity and provided professional development opportunities based on this framework. Civic learning for a multiracial democracy cannot be done in a manner that fails to embrace the cultural wealth and lived experiences of all students. The approach described in this article offers an alternative way of thinking about civic learning that can inform other efforts or be replicated in other locations.

John Dewey (1916/1980) famously said, “Democracy has to be reborn every generation, and education is its midwife” (p. 139). Accordingly, a long line of educators and political leaders have called on systems of education to foster the development of knowledge and skills needed for democratic participation along with a commitment to the common good that grounds a wise use of that learning. A resurgence of attention to this public purpose in higher education was kindled by the American Association of College and Universities (AAC&U) release in 2012 of *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy’s Future* (National Task Force).

However, the vast majority of this work on civic learning and student civic identity formation has been done by White teachers and scholars, thinking all too often about the experiences and perspectives of predominantly White students. How would our thinking about this work shift if we looked at it through a lens of racial equity, taking the experiences and charting the trajectories of students who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) as centrally as we do the learning processes of White students? How would a race-conscious approach—which intentionally considers the assets and educational needs of both BIPOC and White students rather than a colorblind approach—help us identify ways to address the resulting racial disparities?

The project presented here embraces these questions and contributes a framework for civic learning developed through a lens of racial equity; it also provides an overview of how the framework was used to support professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators across Massachusetts. The overarching

aim of this project in Massachusetts is to offer an alternative way of thinking about civic learning that includes focused attention on the cultural wealth of BIPOC students.

Background

This project is grounded in two actions by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education: its previous adoption of a *Policy on Civic Learning* (MDHE, 2014) and recent establishment of racial equity as the top strategic priority for Massachusetts public higher education (MDHE, n.d.):

1. The 2014 *Policy on Civic Learning*, informed by the call to action conveyed in *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force, 2012), made Massachusetts the first statewide system of higher education to set the expectation for its campuses to involve all undergraduates in civic learning through academic coursework, co-curricular activities, and off-campus civic engagement.
2. The 2018 establishment of racial equity as Massachusetts' top strategic priority for public higher education resulted in the *New Undergraduate Experience* (MDHE, 2022), which confronts racial disparities and provides a foundational vision for inclusive excellence, followed by the adoption of a 10-year *Strategic Plan for Racial Equity* (MDHE, 2022/2023), which calls on institutions systemwide to re-think—through a lens of racial equity—all policies, programs, and processes that touch undergraduates.

As Massachusetts leaders in civic learning and engagement took on increasingly explicit commitments to equity and racial justice in their work, it became clear that the previous policy on civic learning encoded norms of Whiteness; this encoded system perpetuates privileges and advantages for individuals perceived as White and simultaneously marginalizes and disadvantages individuals from other racial and ethnic backgrounds (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2013; Okun, 2021). A new vision was needed—both of civic learning outcomes through a lens of racial equity, and of the essential faculty and staff development necessary to guide students toward these outcomes. The very first recommendation under the state's systemwide *Strategic Plan for Racial Equity* (MDHE 2022/23) the strategic plan's strategy for educational experience represents the baseline for the project presented in this article:

Identify the knowledge and skills needed for full and effective participation in civic life and public problem-solving in a multiracial democracy, in order to acknowledge and build upon the cultural wealth carried by individual students of color through the curriculum and co-curriculum. (MDHE, 2022/2023, p. 36)

In 2019–2020, and again in 2021, the Department of Higher Education (DHE) offered grants to the Massachusetts public campuses to work on racial equity, and a group of faculty/staff from three, then four of the campuses received funding to connect equity and engagement. The second grant project focused squarely on faculty development for anti-racist community engagement, culminating in a virtual symposium attended by 549 people from across the country. Expanding to include faculty from more institutions both public and

private, the group renamed itself the New England Equity and Engagement Consortium (N3EC, n.d.) and took on several new projects. One project focused on a new vision of civic learning outcomes, which was supported by a third grant from the DHE. The faculty institutes described later in this article are the response to considering how to create communities of faculty who will engage deeply with the questions of racial equity and civic engagement.

Getting the recommendation for the new vision into the DHE's Strategic Plan was the first step; the next step was for the DHE Director of Civic Learning and Engagement, co-author John Reiff, to convene a Core Team to do the re-thinking needed. Each of the co-authors of this article are N3EC members of the Core Team; other members include two BIPOC students from Massachusetts public institutions and seven additional faculty/staff from the three sectors of public higher education (community colleges, state universities, and campuses of the University of Massachusetts system). Care was taken to construct the membership of the Core Team to make it predominantly BIPOC.

The authors and other members of N3EC share the core commitments and embrace the building blocks espoused in this special issue (Schnaubelt, 2022), most significantly, a deep commitment to the values, practices, and institutions of liberal democracy—which necessitates a corresponding commitment to racial equity. We stand with others who view higher education as a primary institution responsible for instilling the values and practices of liberal democracy (Boyte & Kari, 2000; Colby et al., 2003, 2007; Daniels, 2021; Harkavy, 2006; Hartley, 2009). We recognize that important work has been done in recent years to reassert civic learning as a fundamental purpose of institutions of higher education (Brammer et al., 2012; National Task Force, 2012). We maintain that these efforts need to be redoubled while centering racial equity.

Furthermore, we believe that this work is urgent. Racial diversity in the United States is rapidly increasing (US Census Bureau, 2018; Frey, 2018a, 2018b) as fears over illiberal trends in American democracy and beyond abound (Mettler & Lieberman, 2020; Mounk, 2018; Zakaria, 1997). An increasingly diverse society demands that all students—those who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and those who identify as White—are prepared to work together to achieve the inclusive and equitable institutions and social relations that represent the foundations for democracy. As Hurtado (2019) has proclaimed, “now is the time to recenter civic learning within and across all institutions and disciplines, as well as undertake more critical approaches to this work in terms of pedagogy that prepares students for a diverse and unequal society” (p. 94).

The project we are describing here began in Fall 2022, with two research questions drawn directly from the DHE Strategic Plan for Racial Equity:

- 1) What do we want students in Massachusetts public higher education—both BIPOC and White students—to learn that will enable them to participate fully and effectively in public problem-solving in multiracial communities and building a multiracial democracy?
- 2) Regarding civic learning, what will help us and our colleagues acknowledge and build upon the cultural wealth carried by individual students of color? (MDHE, 2022/2023)

From the first two questions came a third:

- 3) What needs to happen in faculty and staff development to enable faculty and staff to guide the students they work with toward these learning outcomes?

In our work on the first two questions, we divided the Core Team into two working groups. The first working group focused on exploring the literature connecting civic learning outcomes with themes of racial equity and justice, which is explored in the following section. The second working group held conversations (through interviews and focus groups) with students, faculty, staff, and community partners at Massachusetts public institutions about what students—both BIPOC and White—need to learn in order to meet the challenge of participating fully and effectively in public problem-solving in multiracial communities and building a multiracial democracy, and about the cultural wealth that BIPOC students bring to this work. Combining the literature review and the results of these conversations resulted in the development of the Pillars and a Framework which are shared later in the article. For the third question, the Core Team designed professional development around the new vision of civic learning for a multiracial democracy and brought it to five two-day summer institutes in different regions of Massachusetts—Northeast, Southeast, Boston Area, Central, and Western—for faculty and staff. These are described in the third section of this article.

Review of the Literature: What Do We Mean by Civic Learning, Civic Identity, and Racial Equity?

The 2014 civic learning policy in Massachusetts built upon the framework of civic learning outcomes presented in *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force, 2012) by defining civic learning as follows:

Acquisition of the knowledge, the intellectual skills, and the applied competencies that citizens need for informed and effective participation in civic and democratic life; it also means acquiring an understanding of the social values that underlie democratic structures and practices (MDHE, 2014, pp. 2–3).

The emphasis on engendering civic competencies in this definition of civic learning is closely related to the development of civic identity understood as “a set of beliefs and emotions about oneself as a participant in civic life” (Hart et al., 2011). Civic learning frameworks often include outcomes such as civic dispositions, inclinations, and values (Brammer et al., 2012) that overlap with conceptions of civic identity depicted as a sense of belonging and responsibility to a larger community (Atkins & Hart, 2003; Kirshner, 2009; Youniss et al., 1997). Civic identity is more subjective (one’s own view of self) but similarly developed over time (Hart et al., 2011; Johnson, 2017; Knefelkamp, 2008; Youniss, et al., 1997).

Moreover, given the developmental nature of both constructs, higher education plays an enormously important role in nurturing both civic competencies and civic identity in students (Colby & Damon 1992; Hurtado et al.,

2012; Knefelkamp, 2008; Torney-Purta et al., 2015; Youniss, et al., 1997). Although the relationship between civic learning outcomes and civic identity is dynamic and multi-directional, civic learning outcomes are best understood as the building blocks that cultivate healthy civic identities: as we learn the knowledge, skills, and values that position us for informed and effective civic engagement, we develop an awareness of ourselves as connected to, able to contribute to, and responsible to a larger community. Thus, the aim of engendering civic competencies and developing civic identity is to equip students to be full and effective participants in a liberal democracy.

Efforts to clearly identify civic learning competencies or outcomes to guide the design and assessment of curricular and co-curricular civic learning activities in higher education have proliferated (Brammer et al., 2012; National Task Force, 2012). Early examples include; the work of Battistoni (2002) in recognizing the shared civic learning aims of service-learning courses across different disciplines; Kirlin (2003) who sought to identify the skills necessary for effective civic participation; Musil's (2003, 2009) influential models of civic learning outcomes shaped through both curricular and co-curricular opportunities; and several iterations of civic learning objectives and assessment instruments based on conceptions of a civic-minded graduate developed at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (Hatcher, 2008; Steinberg, et al., 2011). Civic learning frameworks, including the AAC&U's (2009) *Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric* and the Civic and Global Learning category of the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile* (Adelman et al., 2011), continue to provide clearly defined objectives for civic learning efforts in higher education.

However, there is also recognition of a problematic relationship between civic learning initiatives and racial equity. The K-12 multicultural education movement has long wrestled with questions of diversity and unity while challenging the assimilationist assumptions typically inherent in civic education (Banks 2004, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2020; Banks & Banks, 2019; Parker, 1996, 2002). Other scholars have challenged deficit notions by introducing asset-based pedagogies that view the cultural frames of BIPOC students as strengths to draw upon for learning processes across the curriculum. Culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b) and culturally responsive (Gay, 2002, 2018) pedagogies intentionally honor the knowledge and experiences BIPOC students bring from their homes and communities. Yosso (2005) contributed a framework of such strengths based on the concept of community cultural wealth defined as “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77). These asset-based approaches reveal the unique contributions BIPOC students offer to civic learning processes and outcomes.

Focus on the assets of BIPOC students disrupts the centering of Whiteness in civic learning. Leonardo (2002) defined Whiteness as “a collection of everyday strategies characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions” (p. 32). As numerous scholars have exposed through overlapping critiques, civic learning strategies tend to utilize a race-neutral approach that normalizes Whiteness while failing to confront racialized issues of exclusion and oppression (Ladson-Billings, 2004, 2005; Parker 1996, 2002; Urrieta & Reidel, 2008).

Mitchell's (2008, 2013, 2015) research suggests that critical approaches to civic learning have great promise for developing the civic competencies and civic identities a multiracial democracy demands. Specifically, Mitchell

(2015) found that sustained community engagement connected to the curriculum (but beyond the classroom) and a multi-semester cohort approach, allows students to grapple with social justice questions and challenge one another, have a lasting impact on students' capacity to create social change and understand themselves as change agents. Additional literature on anti-racist and critical approaches have considered the power relationships that maintain dominant educational systems, normalizing Whiteness (Kishimoto, 2018; Kincheloe et al., 2000). Approaches to civic learning that ignore the cultural context of BIPOC students result in a "civic opportunity gap" (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008) or "civic empowerment gap" (Levinson, 2010).

Previous White-led and White-centric approaches to civic learning and the development of civic identity need to be interrogated with a lens of racial equity. New approaches need to be developed that move beyond the normalizing of Whiteness and an implicit message of "come join us" from White teachers to students who identify as BIPOC. How can institutions of higher education foster the civic competencies and a civic identity necessary for all students to become racially equitable co-creators of a multiracial democracy?

Laying the Groundwork for a New Approach to Civic Learning in Massachusetts

Identifying Pillars of Civic Learning for a Multiracial Democracy

From the robust literature review and through a series of conversations undertaken by the working group of N3EC, the following three pillars were formed, which undergird our work together, and formed the backbone of the faculty institutes.

1. **Acknowledge the racist history and present state of our country.** Critical awareness of the persistence of Whiteness as a mechanism of exclusion from full civic participation and equitable societal benefits is a necessary first step towards a multiracial democracy. The privileging of Whiteness was built into the institutional structures and social relations of the United States to enable racially contingent opportunities for property ownership and ongoing systems of domination (Bell, 1987, 1992; Harris 1993, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Roediger, 2002, 2019). Thus, Whiteness has historically determined who counts as a legal citizen or equal participant in US democracy with full rights and responsibilities (Feagin & Ducey, 2018; Hannah-Jones, 2021; Smith, 1988, 1997). Efforts continue to limit which people are considered citizens and which people can vote (Ellis, 2017). In this light, concepts and terms which should be unifying—such as "citizens" or "citizenship" and "democracy"—connote enduring racialized subjugation and remind us that BIPOC participation in this country's democracy has always come with struggle (Bhambra, 2015; Bosniak, 2008).

Because White Americans have been able to hold tightly to their power, racist ideas and stereotypes have fueled explicit and intentional systemic racism that affects everyday lives of BIPOC people. Evidence such as residential segregation, unfair lending practices, segregated schools, biased policing and sentencing, discriminatory employment and wages, etc. signals that Americans who identify as BIPOC are perpetually

subordinate (Alexander, 2020; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Darity & Mullen, 2022; Massey & Denton, 2019; Rothstein, 2017). Racialized inequalities like these, that are both historic and present, must be acknowledged and fully understood for all students to heal from historic oppression and to make room for a more inclusive multiracial civic life.

2. **Recognize that civic learning cannot be done in a colorblind or culturally irrelevant, insensitive, or unaware way.** Given the racialized inequities in opportunities for civic participation and access to societal benefits, students come to civic learning opportunities from vastly different lived experiences. In contrast to the psychological advantages of White privilege, BIPOC students may not have the same sense of belonging to the political community or belief in the possibilities of benefitting from the system (Clay & Rubin, 2020; Cornbleth, 2002; Epstein, 2001; Williams, 1995). Therefore, civic learning simply cannot be done in a colorblind or culturally unconscious way. Rather than pursuing a colorblind approach, civic learning for a multiracial democracy must recognize, seek, and value the contributions of diverse social identities and disparate experiences.

Opportunities for students to better understand their own social identities lay the groundwork for developing a culturally conscious civic identity. All students must learn to work across differences to solve public problems in a way that contributes to the common good in a socially just and racially equitable manner. For White students, civic learning for a multiracial democracy will likely include learning to recognize the centering of Whiteness and the normalizing force of maintaining the status quo. Educators must be able and willing to challenge such assumptions for learning to take place. BIPOC students may need support in overcoming the trauma of deficit messages in order to view themselves as civic actors. They may also need opportunities to recognize the cultural wealth of their communities in contributing to our democracy, and the ways that their actions within those communities may be understood as civic action.

3. **Instill a commitment to creating racially inclusive and equitable institutions and social relations.** An approach to civic learning that acknowledges the imperfect historical democracy of the United States creates space for students to understand themselves as co-creators of an aspirational democracy. As opposed to more authoritarian forms of government, democracy allows for such civic agency to create social change. Thus, civic learning for a multiracial democracy must instill a commitment to social change.

This fundamental commitment to social change is necessary to achieve racially inclusive and equitable institutions and social relations in a multiracial democracy. To accomplish this aim, the civic agency of BIPOC students may need to be affirmed. At the same time, the privilege of White students may need to be confronted. However, all students must recognize that the aspirations associated with a multiracial democracy can only be achieved by working together. Furthermore, educators can view civic learning for a multiracial democracy as central to their work regardless of their role. New approaches to civic learning are needed that transcend a focus on individual courses and programs on the margins and become pervasive in institutions of higher education. Equipping students, faculty, staff, and administrators to bring about the racially inclusive and equitable institutions and social relations that a multiracial democracy demands will take all of us.

Developing a Framework for Civic Learning Through a Lens of Racial Equity

Building on the pillars and informed by a draft framework circulated by the national Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) Coalition (n.d.), the Core Team mined the data from interviews and focus groups with over 100 students, faculty, staff, and community partners to identify the specific elements that constitute civic learning through a lens of racial equity. Then, a smaller team spent a day identifying emergent themes and transforming the data into a draft in response to our first question, *what do students need to learn?*

The draft, [A Framework for Civic Learning Through a Lens of Racial Equity](#) (Burns et al., 2023), articulates the kinds of learning students should encounter throughout their entire curricular (including first-year, general education, majors, minors, and capstones) and co-curricular educational experience to prepare them to be productive change makers in their public and private lives. It is designed around four major learning domains:

- Creating a Civic Identity
- Democratic Knowledge and Levers for Change
- Skills for a Multiracial Democracy
- Practical Experiences with Communities On and Off Campus

Each domain is realized through a definition and eight to eleven non-measurable learning outcomes that specify meaning and speak directly back to the stakeholders whose voices and experiences helped shape it, suggesting that supporting students' civic learning is effectively a shared responsibility. Explicit in each learning outcome is attention to the impact of race in our and students' work within and across racial identities.

Statewide Professional Development Convenings

With the Pillars and Framework drafted, we turned our attention to planning the statewide convenings. The Core Team designed professional development around the new vision of civic learning for a multiracial democracy and brought it to five two-day summer institutes in different regions of Massachusetts—Northeast, Southeast, Boston Area, Central, and Western—for faculty and staff.

Planning and Recruiting

Our overall aim in designing the institutes was to build a diverse network of champions of civic learning and racial equity in each of the five regions of the state where the institutes are being held. This meant that we needed to recruit faculty and staff participants who to some degree were already recognizing and leveraging the cultural wealth of their BIPOC students as they likely already sought to reach each outcome of the Framework. We also wanted to enable participants who were neighbors to have a new circle of colleagues to connect with for ideas and support.

Therefore, we planned to include substantial time in both whole group and smaller group discussion; given time and grant funding constraints this meant that we kept the whole group small to have adequate time for everyone in the whole group circle to be heard and to have the possibility of connecting with all the other participants over the two days. By focusing on relationship-building in this way, we hoped to create an environment of mutual learning, where participants felt safe enough to recognize mistakes as opportunities to learn in ways that might better allow them to carry their learning back to their campuses and share, and we hoped that we would be better positioned to effectively track a process of change across all of the publics and partnering private institutions in Massachusetts.

Each iteration of the Institute had the following goals, which were shared with participants:

- Construct a shared understanding of the connections between racial equity and civic learning and engagement—and the implications of those connections for our own practice in our work with students.
- Explore two tools created by a team of Massachusetts faculty and staff: *Principles for Anti-Racist Community Engagement* (Salem State, n.d.) and *A Framework for Civic Learning Through a Lens of Racial Equity* (Burns et al., 2023)
- Explore how these resources might be embedded in student-facing practices—course design and pedagogy, work with students—and explore how to organize other people on campuses to adopt and adapt our work.
- Leave with a sense of new connection to a professional learning community—a group of colleagues from institutions near theirs who they can continue to share ideas and approaches with and engage in mutual support.

With the help of Directors of Civic or Community Engagement Centers, publicly engaged faculty, and referrals, BIPOC and White facilitation teams of three to four recruited two representatives (faculty, staff, or administrators) from each of the 28 undergraduate-serving public colleges and universities in the state, as well as some private colleges, to attend the regional summer institutes. Mixed groups of BIPOC and White participants joined us from across the three sectors of Massachusetts public higher education: community colleges, state universities, and the University of Massachusetts system as well as some private colleges. This meant that each convening typically hosted representatives of up to seven state institutions and three privates; there were 57 public participants in total. State funding provided small stipends to the participants from the public institutions.

Design of the Two-Day Summer Institutes

Facilitation teams met together early on to set an overall pattern for each of the two days, then we used a process of cumulative redesign in offering the institutes—learning from each iteration and revising the design as made sense.

Day One

Beyond welcomes and introductions, participants spent the first morning exploring civic identity by first sharing about their own civic identity origin stories and hearing others' stories, then discussing similarities and differences among the group; the following prompt supported this work:

Story Circle (90 min.): Explore where our civic identities come from (five min per person). “What were some key experiences that led to your social justice values? How have those values shaped your sense of civic identity?”

In the afternoon, attention was turned to generating ideas about racial equity work already underway on our different campuses. Two documents, each with four parts and with similarly structured non-measurable outcomes, mediated these discussions: first, the *Principles for Anti-Racist Community Engagement*, then the *Framework*. Depending on the Institute, participants either simply used the documents to have pointedly useful conversations, or they discussed their ideas and then wrote them down on sticky notes, which were then typed up. Effectively, participants worked in three to four small groups, spending 15 minutes per component or one hour per document.

Day Two

Building on the conversations from the first day, the focus of day two was “Using the Framework in Our Roles & Institutions.” To support this thinking, participants both engaged in a deeper sharing of practices already in use and acted as consultants to those considering practices that they want to adopt or implement with prompts like the following:

In quick round-robin “consultations,” individuals ask for help and get advice immediately from two others. Peer-to-peer coaching helps with discovering everyday solutions, revealing patterns, and refining answers/pilots (Boston Area Institute).

Based on your position/role at your institution, go through the framework to identify elements that would require you to do something different to adopt that element. Discuss where you would need to change something to make a difference. Then, write on a sticky note with ideas for adopting the different elements at your institution (Western Institute).

The second afternoon was devoted to small group discussions about bringing the work back to institutions and planning for action. Prompts for these efforts included:

What is your 15 percent solution? Where do you have discretion and freedom to act? What can you do without more resources or authority?” (Central Institute)

For our final activity, we would like you to take on the lens of a community organizer and an agent of change. Think of your campus as a place you want to organize and connect in support of this work. How can you develop a collaborative basis for working together toward a specific change at your institution? (Southeast Institute)

Depending on the institute, participants either took their own notes or used a structured handout. The handout guided participants to write an organizer's statement (I am organizing *who?* to do *what?*), plan one-on-one consultations with colleagues that strategize around interests, resources, and values to find a basis for working together toward change, and identify concrete steps toward progress. The institutes ended with either an in-person or paper and pencil assessment that asked participants about what might have changed in their thinking about the ways their work can connect civic learning and racial equity, what they liked about the experience, and who they know who might be interested in attending a future version of the Institute.

Preliminary Takeaways

Because we, the four authors of this article, helped facilitate four of the five Institutes, we can report that among the participants there was a resounding sense of appreciation for the language of the *Framework*, the opportunity to convene, and the promise of continuing to be in touch regionally and across the state. Overall, we learned that the non-measurable outcomes articulated in the *Framework* were deeply generative, especially in terms of acknowledging the diverse knowledge of the participants. A more formal assessment will be produced once our grant evaluator reviews all of the resources that we have gathered; her evaluation report will be the basis of a follow-up article that talks in more detail about what we did and what people took away from the institutes.

As facilitators, we had the privilege of meeting colleagues from institutions that we had only known by name, and we got to know people on the basis of their commitment to racial equity. Still, effectively working in mixed BIPOC and White groups to rethink practice around civic learning and racial equity was sometimes challenging. Difficult conversations took place during the institutes such as how decisions on the design of the institutes were made, who dominated conversations, and the distribution of labor. These experiences reminded us, individually and as a mixed-race group, that we have all been harmed by immersion in a culture of White supremacy, and we need to be prepared to acknowledge that harm within ourselves and within participants to support a movement toward healing.

We found that the first day activity was the easiest to manage as everyone was getting to know each other around key moments in their lives that led to the development of their civic identity and their assets (work that was already underway in their classrooms or at their institutions). Conversations became trickier on the second day as small groups worked to identify an element of the Framework they would like to adopt. Because, however, participants worked in small groups in the spirit of brainstorming possibilities, and everyone opted into the experience, groups stayed productive and generative overall.

We do remain with questions. Looking forward, recognizing that adaptation and adoption of this new approach is not necessarily a “one-and-done” experience, *how might participants build on the trust and shared understanding generated with colleagues in the institutes from other campuses to continue rethinking their practice?* We are interested to see how they will continue with one another in mutual exploration and support within their institute teams. We set the conditions for folks to reach out organically; everyone received a list of participants’ names and emails. *How do we stay actively engaged in this work?* We made it clear that as facilitators, we

plan to seek new grant funding to continue to support faculty and staff in future institutes or in other yet to be determined projects.

We also plan to invite the participants in the institutes to book launch parties/discussions about the New England Equity and Engagement Consortium's new book, *Anti-Racist Community Engagement: Principles and Practices* (Santana et al., 2023). Facilitated discussions would explore how the principles and practices in the book could be applied at the campuses. Beyond their own courses or other work with students, *how might participants act as agents of change for the adoption of anti-racist civic learning outcomes within their own institutions?* Here the participants can align with the Massachusetts DHE Strategic Plan for Racial Equity, which is beginning to be shared with campuses and calls for them to rethink and redesign every aspect of civic learning with a lens of racial equity.

Conclusion: Just the Beginning

What are the implications of this new vision of civic learning? It challenges practitioners everywhere to explore whether their approaches privilege White students, White culture, White history, White norms for thinking and acting—and to the extent that they do, to figure out how to change their own practice. It challenges us all to find, hear, and honor the voices and visions that may have been hidden from us in the civic domain—especially hidden from those of us who are White—therefore assisting in the very much needed social healing. It challenges us to recognize that in this multiracial nation, democracy cannot be built if it is primarily for White people, or if it aims to be colorblind. The possibility of democracy in this nation depends upon explicitly building racial justice within a civic vision that acknowledges the forms of injustice still plaguing us and commits to actions of healing and justice.

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Author Note

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Author Bios

Gene Corbin, PhD candidate, is currently completing his dissertation at the University of Massachusetts Boston while teaching as a part-time faculty member of Tisch College for Civic Life at Tufts University. Gene previously served in several leadership roles with community-based organizations and as Dean for Public Service at Harvard College. His scholarly interests relate to community engaged forms of scholarship and civic learning for a multiracial democracy.

Christina Santana, PhD, is an Associate Professor English at Worcester State University who also served as a Writing Center Director and as an Associate Director of Community Learning in a Center for Community Engagement. Her teaching has focused on capacity-building for professional writing, while her scholarship has explored innovative, collaborative structures and frameworks in several contexts, including connecting composition mega courses, facilitating the work of writing groups/teams across difference, networking writing centers and organizations within a city, and advancing anti-racist community engagement.

John Reiff, PhD, has worked with service-learning and civic engagement for over 40 years. He is Director of Civic Learning and Engagement for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, where he works with the 29 community colleges, state universities, and campuses of the University of Massachusetts system to help them build civic learning and engagement into their students' college experiences. Using a community organizing approach, his primary focus currently is on braiding together civic learning and engagement with a commitment to racial equity.

William Guedes Cortezia, PhD, is a Brazilian pedagogue and tenured faculty at the School of Education at Fitchburg State University. He is a speaker in college access and success, community outreach, and pedagogy for educators working with underserved/underprepared students and students at risk of dropping out of school. He works with higher education institutions, K-12 schools, and non-profit organizations helping them further develop and evolve their work with students and communities.

Gene Corbin, <gene.corbin01@gmail.com>, (617)767-8348 is the corresponding author for this article.