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In 2017, fourteen places received WKKF support to implement TRHT in their community using a shared Framework and Implementation Guidebook, co-developed by more than 144 individuals and organizations. TRHT places include: (1) State of Alaska; (2) Baton Rouge and (3) New Orleans, Louisiana; (4) Buffalo, New York; (5) Greater Chicago, Illinois; (6) Dallas, Texas; (7) Los Angeles, California; (8) Richmond, Virginia; (9) Selma, Alabama; (10) Saint Paul, Minnesota; (11) Battle Creek, (12) Flint, (13) Kalamazoo and (14) Metro Lansing, Michigan.

As many approach the fourth year of implementation, TRHT collaborations are at the forefront of diverse and interconnected approaches to fostering racial healing, building relationships and changing narratives to advance racial equity in the systems and structures that impact children and families.

To share progress on what has been learned so far, their stories and insights are compiled in these seven knowledge briefs. They provide a glimpse into the opportunities, nuances and complexities of implementing a community-based TRHT. As you will see, the work requires creativity, agility, resilience and experimentation because much of it has not been attempted before in these interconnected ways and at this scale. But it is a worthwhile journey. We hope the briefs will inform and inspire other communities considering similar efforts.

Knowledge Briefs
Each knowledge brief explores aspects of Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation based on the Framework and Implementation Guidebook. They include stories and lessons directly from TRHT places and their first three years of implementation.

1. Community Visioning & Planning
The TRHT community visioning and planning process helps articulate a vision of what the future of a community could be without racism and the beliefs that undergird it; creates shared understanding of the past and current contexts; and develops a flexible plan for transformation. Stories & Lessons from Greater Chicago, Dallas and Kalamazoo

2. Youth Leadership & Engagement
The voices, leadership and participation of young people are essential to any community transformation effort. Implementing a TRHT is intergenerational work that develops, supports and builds power among young leaders. Stories & Lessons from Metro Lansing, Kalamazoo and Saint Paul

3. Racial Healing & Relationship Building
Racial Healing is a process within TRHT that restores individuals and communities to wholeness, repairs the damage caused by racism and transforms societal structures into ones that affirm the inherent value of all people. The process is designed to carefully build the relationships and trust necessary to sustain the work of transformation as part of TRHT. It is woven into all aspects of implementation and considers the local context and work across all Indigenous, racial and ethnic groups, generations and sectors in a community. Stories & Lessons from Alaska, Greater Chicago and New Orleans
4. **Narrative Change**

Narratives are the stories told about individual and collective histories. TRHTs examine existing community narratives and the ways racism is present to determine how to tell the more complete, multifaceted narratives of all community members. At times, this work reveals uncomfortable truths. Yet, the process can be restorative because it acknowledges the pain and suffering caused by racism and the vision, resistance and resilience of those affected. *Stories & Lessons from Battle Creek, Los Angeles, Richmond and Saint Paul*

5. **Separation**

TRHTs are examining and finding ways to address the impacts of forced segregation, colonization and concentrated poverty in neighborhoods and communities to ultimately ensure equitable access to health, housing, education and jobs. *Stories & Lessons from Baton Rouge, Flint and Selma*

6. **The Law**

TRHT efforts are seeking solutions for implementing a system of law at the local, state, tribal and federal levels that honors the dignity and civil rights of all people, invites full civic participation and remedies inequities in the current legal system. *Stories & Lessons from Baton Rouge, Buffalo and Metro Lansing*

7. **Economy**

TRHTs are working to create thriving economies where all community members can access resources and opportunities for employment and wealth creation and influence the systems and policies that impact families’ lives and community. *Stories & Lessons from Buffalo and Selma*


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### The TRHT Framework

The Framework’s five areas guide every community implementing a TRHT. The first two areas: (1) Narrative Change and (2) Racial Healing & Relationship Building, are essential and continuous for every TRHT effort, because this is where you do the necessary people work so that you can more effectively do the systems change work in the areas of (3) Separation; (4) the Law; and (5) the Economy.

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### Narrative Change

- Entertainment Industry
- Journalism & News Media
- Digital Media
- Publishing
- School Curricula
- Cultural Institutions
- Monuments, Parks

### Racial Healing and Relationship Building

#### Separation

- Segregation, Colonization & Concentrated Poverty
- Decolonization
- Housing
- Health
- Arts & Culture
- Immigration & Migration
- Education & Development

#### Law

- Civil, Criminal & Public Policies
- Law Enforcement
- Safety
- Criminal Justice
- Civil Justice
- Mass Incarceration
- Immigration & Migration
- Education & Development

#### Economy

- Structured Inequality & Barriers to Opportunity
- Employment
- Labor
- Workforce
- Wealth
- Immigration & Migration
- Education & Development

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**Want to Learn More?**

Visit healourcommunities.org to learn more about TRHT or to download the Implementation Guidebook.
All communities possess the inherent capacity to solve their own problems. Those most impacted by racism and its effects can have the deepest insights into innovative solutions that can transform beliefs and systems, improve outcomes and sustain change.

Will Keith Kellogg, the founder of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), articulated a formula for change that relies on the leadership, wisdom and authentic engagement of community members. He said “...it is only through cooperative planning, intelligent study and group action – activities on the part of the entire community – that lasting results can be achieved.” This guidance was essential to the more than 144 individuals and organizations who co-developed the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Framework and Implementation Guidebook in 2016.

An early and ongoing part of every TRHT implementation is a community visioning and planning process. This helps articulate a vision of what a community’s future could be without racism and develops a flexible plan for implementation and transformation. And, most importantly, it develops a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-sectoral and intergenerational collaborative of people who want to be involved and eventually be part of what are called design teams – smaller working groups who focus on a particular part(s) of the TRHT implementation guided by the Framework.

**What is Community Visioning & Planning?**

Community visioning and planning is an ongoing, iterative and collaborative process to set a direction and identify issues to work on together. The process must be culturally appropriate, responsive to the local context and respectful of the sovereignty of Native Nations in order to dismantle historic and contemporary racism and forge new relationships for collaboration within and across cultural communities.

An effective community visioning and planning process:
- builds and deepens trusting relationships
- develops individual and collective capacity
- commits to and demonstrates shared leadership among participants
- aims to shape institutional practices and systems so that community members can effectively navigate, engage and collaborate as trusted partners
- respects, celebrates, honors and builds upon a community’s current and historic engagement efforts
- creates environments wherein community values, culture, knowledge, languages and aspirations are highly regarded
To begin, the TRHT community visioning and planning process asks five questions:

1. What will your community look and feel like after racism has ended?
2. What are the current racial realities of your community and how did you get here?
3. What are the key leverage points of change in your community?
4. Who are the key stakeholders and beneficiaries not at the table? How can they be engaged?
5. What specific actions can be taken to achieve your vision of a community without racism?

By engaging with these questions (and later with deeper ones), communities work together to understand and identify harmful narratives about children, families and communities; recognize that action can also be about building relationships and trust within a community (which takes time and practice) and identify short, medium and long-term goals to transform systems and structures in the TRHT Framework (e.g., Separation, the Law and Economy).

**Stories of Action**

**Chicago, Illinois**

As the coordinating organization for Greater Chicago TRHT, the Woods Fund began engaging community members while acknowledging the extensive and existing racial equity work in the region. They wanted to build upon things already underway and connect efforts under a larger umbrella so that people would invest in a common vision for the city.

Guided by the TRHT Framework, a small group of consultants working with the Woods Fund co-designed the overarching structure for their visioning and planning process. It focused on four design teams developing a vision, three- and one-year goals, and a work plan to reach the goals. Their design teams are Truth & Narrative, Law & Policy, Healing, and Youth.

More than 300 people – a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-sectoral and intergenerational group – participated in community visioning and planning over five months in 2017-2018. Co-leads for each design team facilitated meetings with a consultant providing staffing support. Each team met at least four times with the first session developing a vision and later meetings developing goals, strategies and work plans for implementation. A common framework with desired outcomes guided each session, but design teams developed custom, interactive agendas based on the team’s racial healing, relationship building and learning needs. Racial healing opportunities were woven throughout the process. Learning was supported by invited guest speakers and peers sharing about work they’re doing on the ground.

Co-leads also met regularly in a Leadership Advisory Committee to keep the work of the different teams coordinated, help guide the overall implementation, learn from each other and ensure all teams were in constant communication.

*…it’s important “that the process you design is interactive, that there’s time in each meeting for healing prompts as well as reflection or discussion afterwards and throughout … “Sometimes we brought in keynote or guest speakers with expertise. Sometimes we had peer learning or sharing where there were people on the ground doing the work who were educating the rest of us about what they were doing.”*

- Heather Parish
  Consultant
  Greater Chicago TRHT
Every meeting was documented so that people who missed meetings could read the notes, catch up and reengage at the next meeting. Once visions and goals were developed by each design team, the consultants worked to braid all of it together into an overarching strategy to advance truth, racial healing and transformation in greater Chicago.

Dallas, Texas
Working from the TRHT Implementation Guidebook, Dallas TRHT began their work by learning the local history and engaging in a city-wide visioning and planning process. They piloted the process with young people through the organization You Got This. About 200 youth (7th to 12th graders) offered input into a vision of Dallas without racism and feedback on questions that would be used for the larger visioning and planning process. For the 2018 National Day of Racial Healing, Dallas held a day-long community visioning session with more than 100 people, including police officers and representatives from philanthropy and every sector in the city. The day started with visioning and included an approach to racial healing that combined storytelling, yoga, movement, dance and theater.

“I was excited about the different dynamics of the groups and ... that folks were really candid. There were folks who said I can't imagine Dallas without racism. There were folks who said I can and this is what I hope for.”
- Jerry Hawkins
  Executive Director
  Dallas TRHT

Dallas TRHT also developed a relationship with the Dallas Public Library system, and together they hosted multiple two-hour facilitated visioning sessions in the evenings throughout the north, south, east and west ends of the city. The library invited youth from each of the regions to the sessions. Each session started with some level-setting – defining language like race, racism, racial equity, racial healing and racial justice – and then digging into what people wanted to see in the city. Each session had the flavor of that neighborhood and the community living in it, with some needing to take longer on definitions and level-setting while other neighborhoods focused more on what Dallas would be like without racism.

Notes (including, in some cases, graphic recording) were taken at all sessions and aggregated into a vision, helping to set the strategy for Dallas TRHT. Two themes emerged for their work: (1) the need to focus energy on education related to the history of race and racism in Dallas and (2) the lack of justice in the education system; and the need to focus on the economy – on developing resources, access and opportunities in communities of color.

Kalamazoo, Michigan
In Kalamazoo, Michigan, the community started planning in December 2016. The initial group of five partners slowly began expanding so that by the 2017 National Day of Racial Healing one month later, there were 11 partners. It became clear that the community was interested in implementing a TRHT and that the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, who had built trust funding racial equity work over a number of years, would serve as a coordinating organization to convene interested people and organizations.
When their official visioning and planning process started, there were more than 180 partners – grassroots and institutional leaders who were committed to racial equity work already, though often working in smaller groupings of two or three organizations – not as a unified group across the city. Partners committed to participate in racial healing circles and analysis building trainings (which included a local history tour, an Implicit Association Test and other training sessions about issues related to race in a deeper way) in addition to visioning and planning. This combination was essential to centering racial healing.

Kalamazoo chose to develop a vision and plans for work in each of the five TRHT Framework areas (Narrative Change, Racial Healing & Relationship Building, Separation, the Law and Economy) and tasked a Leadership Team with bringing the teams together and prioritizing the work. It was a unique moment for people from organizations across Kalamazoo to be creative and participate in a space that was open-ended so that people could get out of their institutional parameters and start to think big picture about what the community really needs. Out of this process came a robust plan for transformation across all five areas of the Framework that they continue to implement and refine.

**Lessons**

When community members drive how problems are defined, decisions are made and solutions are created, meaningful change becomes possible. The TRHT community visioning and planning process creates a shared vision and implementation plan where all people have the agency, power, access and ability to shape the relationships, narratives, policies and practices that affect their lives.

If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Follow the TRHT Implementation Guidebook.** TRHT collaboratives described that as the most important thing they did. It helps you think carefully about structuring the process and the work. You can download it at www.healourcommunities.org.

- **This Work Takes Time.** Launching design teams took longer than many anticipated. Be prepared for that part of the process and give yourselves time to prepare.

- **Start with the Heart of Your Community.** Much of the work being done to dismantle structural racism is led by Black and Brown communities. Start by listening to, learning from and leaning on the expertise, wisdom and legacy of Black and Brown leaders dedicated to racial equity and healing efforts – they make up the heart and soul of the community. At the end of the day, TRHT is about heart work. Start there. Center the work there.

- **Center Racial Healing & Pair it With Visioning.** Be sure to build racial healing capacity first. Engage local racial healing practitioners to help or develop that capacity in your community. It helps open people up and builds the relationships and trust necessary for community visioning and implementation of TRHT work.
• **Keep Things Interactive.** Make sure that the process is interactive and that there’s time in each meeting for racial healing prompts as well as reflection or discussion afterwards and throughout.

• **Don’t Forget Staff Support.** Implementing a TRHT requires a dedicated staff team focused on gathering the ideas and contributions of community members, summarizing it, sharing it back, helping to facilitate, being the backbone support for the design team members, co-chairs and the leadership team. It is also essential that staff consistently lean into the wisdom and expertise of community members and continue to build community agency and collaboration throughout this process.

**About TRHT**

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Young leaders know what’s important to them. Collaboratives implementing Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) are committed to ensuring that young people are key architects of their communities’ liberation and work intergenerationally to make their dreams real. TRHT communities must focus on both youth and intergenerational engagement and on youth leadership to ensure the work supports young leaders’ efforts to build their own power.

Waiting to engage young leaders until after plans are developed undermines the prospect of real intergenerational work and youth leadership. The essential early engagement of young people requires building trust as well as transparency about the process, decision-making and power dynamics. Building ladders for entry and connections between movements enables young leaders to navigate between organizations and movements. This intergenerational work necessarily calls for a long-term commitment to centering the work around youth engagement and addressing the interrelated systems of oppression that affect young leaders, including adultism.

Stories of Action

Lansing, Michigan
One Love Global, the coordinating organization of TRHT of Metro Lansing, is youth-led and centers youth in their work as a value in their implementation. Lansing youth requested to have their own TRHT table and to be at the table with adults, so the TRHT created both youth-only spaces and intergenerational ones where everyone learns and works together. This also ensures that everyone can support the work youth want to lead for themselves and their peers.

In developing their initial concept for TRHT, almost all of Lansing’s design teams chose work that would impact youth. In large part, the work focuses on supporting youth development through education and training, and supporting youth as agents of change, working on the issues they identify as priorities. Lansing has focused on how to work collaboratively, increasing everyone’s knowledge and skills around how organizing and collective action can lead to transformation in all sectors.

One Love Global launched a statewide Teen Digital Organizing Design Challenge where teens will design the online platform for One Love Global’s youth organizing network, focusing on supporting mental health and wellness.

“…it’s not just about the school to prison pipeline, it’s about the block to prison pipeline because kids are interacting with police in the law system in different ways. The Law team chose to conduct listening sessions with youth to find out how they experience law enforcement – in school and in their neighborhoods.”

- Angela Waters-Austin
Lead
TRHT of Metro Lansing
Originally planned for a cohort of 10, they expanded it to 12 when the response from young people in Metro Lansing, Metro Detroit, Flint and Grand Rapids exceeded their expectations. In the summer of 2020, they launched their first Detroit youth leadership chapter and an eight-week youth organizing fellowship, building on the design challenge.

Essential to their work has been seeing youth as important advocates and sources of their own experience and approaching them as peers with shared leadership. They’ve found that it’s important for youth to have a certain level of autonomy. TRHT of Metro Lansing approaches the work from a youth development perspective, rather than a transactional one. They also work to make sure that community support is there for young adults who are dealing with the impacts of racism every day.

**Kalamazoo, Michigan**

Three youth leaders were Leadership Team members during the design process for TRHT Kalamazoo. Youth leaders also went to design team meetings and focused on youth engagement throughout the TRHT process. Having youth involved directly in the central leadership helped keep youth at the center of the work. Kalamazoo found that a critical part of ensuring youth voice was having trainings and discussions on adultism for the others in the room. They’re finding youth advocacy work and the potential of it as some of their most exciting work, especially in recent housing work they’ve done.

In 2020, their National Day of Racial Healing work focused on youth, a unanimous decision by their Leadership Team. They held a Truth Talk series for young people (ages 10-24) to talk about what racial healing means to them – and young people wrote and shared their own “I Have a Dream” speeches.

Kalamazoo continuously tries to make spaces accessible to youth – thinking about meetings in terms of time of day and transportation – and considering the best streams for communicating with young people, knowing that email communication is not necessarily the best approach. They have paid positions for youth leaders to ensure they don’t need to take other jobs and have time to be a part of the work. And, they ensured that there were three youth leaders on the leadership team – not just one. Sholanna Lewis from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation stresses that we shouldn’t underestimate how quickly young people can turn something around or do something when they’re empowered to do so. Learning to create space for and support young people’s work are different ways of working than most nonprofits and organizations are used to – but are key to engaging young leaders.

**Saint Paul, Minnesota**

The New Narrative Project in Saint Paul was a campaign designed by and for Black males ages 11-32. It initially focused on learning history through the lens of Gordon Parks, an American photographer, musician, writer and film director who became prominent in U.S. documentary photojournalism and in glamour photography. The New Narrative Project work happened in partnership with the High School for the Recording Arts, Individuals with Dreams, Irreducible Grace Foundations, SoulTouch Productions and Youth Lens 360, and was managed by Creative Catalysts. It started with racial healing and affirmation work and by exploring the narratives around young Black men – asking,
“What are the narratives you’ve internalized and the narratives you actually know about yourself? How do you change the narratives for yourself?”

Gordon Parks used a camera as his choice of weapon in the struggle for African American self-determination. The young men picked their own “weapon of choice” – for some it was photography, for others it was storytelling, music or writing. The young men then began to think about the narratives they wanted to see for themselves. A group of young men created the N4 Campaign – New Mindset, New Media, New Leaders and New Narratives. They created a presentation, an original rap piece and did a road tour. They presented at some schools and the media conference – and held a Twitter chat with Grantmakers in the Arts.

Nadege Souvenir of the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation described a key element of the work with the young men as flexibility. They held structured meetings, but there was flexibility built in so they could spend the meeting focused on healing work if it seemed like the young men were dealing with life issues and a lot of stress. The structure was there but was bendable. The young men were full of ideas. They were 18-, 19-, 20-years-old and they came in with a sense that the world is big – and at the same time, life sometimes got in the way, as they were sometimes dealing with homelessness and other issues. It was key to stay aware of the realities young people face and to support where they wanted to go.

**Lessons**

Centering youth leadership and the experiences of youth is essential to implementing TRHT. If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Listen and Make Things Accessible.** Listen directly to youth and set up spaces that are accessible, personal and comfortable. Hold meetings at times and in locations that work for young leaders. Think about providing child care. Consider engaging with young people to decide how to create and facilitate a space that affirms them and where and when to hold meetings.

- **Face and Address Adultism.** Make sure to address adultism among the people implementing TRHT in your community. Offer specific trainings about adultism and talk openly and explicitly about how adultism shows up and what can be done to address it.

- **Compensation.** Consider paying young leaders to play a leadership role so they can be fully present and won’t need to find other employment.

- **Invite More Than One.** Make sure that there are multiple young leaders on the leadership team so that they have support and agency.

- **Accept their Credibility.** See youth as credible sources of their own experience and approach them as peers, in terms of shared leadership. Make sure there’s continuous and open communication about what’s working and what’s not working.

- **Be Flexible.** Young Black and Indigenous people of color (BIPOC) leaders face many realities from experiencing homelessness, family issues, friend issues and negative interactions with the police. Build time to provide ongoing support as issues come up.

- **Provide Autonomy.** Implementing TRHT cannot be about “getting something” from young people but instead it can support them where they are and follow where they lead. Provide autonomy and resources to support the work they determine is the most important.
• **Burnout is Real.** Even young people can be burnt out. There are young, single parents who are juggling full-time jobs, school and dealing with structural and interpersonal racism. Find ways to support them and build trust. It is one of the most important parts of the TRHT work.

• **Stay Energized.** There needs to be enough energy and staff to support the work. Youth leaders will often get things done more quickly and with more energy than you may expect. The young leaders who’ve been involved in the work are full of ideas and innovations. It’s critical to follow their lead and help them make the changes they want to see.

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Racial Healing is a process within Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) that restores individuals and communities to wholeness, repairs the damage caused by racism and transforms societal structures into ones that affirm the inherent value of all people. The process is designed to carefully build the relationships and trust necessary to lean into difficult conversations, constructively engage conflict and sustain the work of transformation as part of TRHT. It is woven into all aspects of implementation and considers the local context and work across all Indigenous, racial and ethnic groups, generations and sectors in a community.

TRHT talks about transformation rather than reconciliation on purpose, as it’s not possible to go back to (or reconcile to) something that never existed. In order to reconcile, there had to be equity and a basis for good relationships in the past; however, that is not the case in the history of the United States. Thus, the focus of TRHT is to transform our communities, make them more equitable and realize a new vision together.

Before you can transform communities, systems and structures, and while you are doing systems change work, you must do the people work. This is an ongoing, intentional process of carefully building the trust needed to sustain the work of transformation for the long-term – from planning through implementation. Racial healing and relationship building must be done in a way that supports the local context and works across all Indigenous, racial and ethnic groups, generations and sectors in a community.

"Racial healing is a process we can undertake as individuals, in communities and across society as a whole. In healing, we recognize our common humanity, acknowledge the truth of past wrongs and build the authentic relationships capable of transforming communities and shifting our national discourse. We offer examples of racial healing work in the TRHT communities as inspiration and a call to action. All of us can learn how to promote racial healing and contribute to building the equitable society our children deserve."

- La June Montgomery Tabron
  President & CEO
  W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Stories of Action

State of Alaska

Alaska Native people have been working for generations to rectify terrible wrongs that have been and continue to be perpetrated against Native peoples since contact and through ongoing colonization. First Alaskans Institute (FAI), the coordinating organization for the Alaska TRHT, works to create a space for truths to be told and to make sure Native people and people of color receive justice and equity. FAI seeks to ensure that Native peoples are fully seen and not made further invisible; are not further disenfranchised, marginalized and made strangers in their own
homelands; are no longer removed and disconnected from who they are and everything they care for in the world. For generations, Alaska Native and Indigenous peoples have felt that federal and state governments, businesses and religions have been aligned against them, ensuring that they will no longer know who they are; that they are separated from their communities, languages and customs; that they needed to be removed from their land so that others can take it; and that they are forced to assimilate and no longer exist as distinct societies of Indigenous peoples. These truths are connected to both the political status and to the racial status of Alaska Natives, and the ongoing conflation of those two distinct statuses has generational implications and serves as the basis for misguided policymaking against Alaska Natives.

FAI co-created the Alaska Native Dialogues on Racial Equity with their community. They hosted dialogues with more than 15,000 people to date, from all walks of life, all racial backgrounds, sectors, organizations, governments, churches, schools and generations (young people to elders) by using a process where all people are welcome. They ask people to tell the truth of what has happened and also to look forward – to talk about the policy impact and what needs to happen from a social, institutional and a system context, so that FAI can hear about aspects that need to change and start finding solutions. Out of these efforts grew a call for intergenerational healing and for a truth and reconciliation-type process in the state of Alaska. The call was for a space for the truth to be told and for wrongs to be righted. It was for a space for those that have been harmed and have done harm to heal, and for systems and institutions to recognize the legacies they have had over time. The intention is for all Alaska Native communities, as well as partners, institutions and organizations to be part of the healing process and a part of designing a future that is transformative.

By incorporating and embedding Native values, the TRHT process in Alaska builds relationships and creates a consistent space for reciprocity of trust, so that the truth can be told. In this process, racial healing is centered and transformation toward the kind of society we want in the future is not only possible, its pathway is clear. This work can only happen in a holistic way, through truth, racial healing and transformation – across society, institutions and systems.

The healing work in Alaska is focused on what the community needs and wants. The TRHT efforts are being established based on a groundswell from the community to create a place where people connect, where the truths can be told and heard, where systems and institutions can hold themselves accountable and help design a new forward-focused legacy of equity and justice. Through TRHT efforts grounded in Native values, there is a chance to work toward intergenerational healing so that a better Alaska is possible once again.
Chicago, Illinois

Chicago is working to confront the hurt racism has done and to heal from that. More than 100 community members from various racial and cultural backgrounds have been trained to host racial healing circles in greater Chicago. Circles have taken place in a diversity of neighborhoods throughout the city and select areas of surrounding Cook County. There has been a concerted effort to host circles in Black and Brown communities with trained healing practitioners that live and/or work in these communities. These practitioners also actively seek to connect with community-based organizations and link people participating in healing circles to needed services.

The city of Chicago is also working with Greater Chicago TRHT to position healing circles as a vehicle for development and anti-poverty projects. The goal is to build and strengthen relationships and trust among community members, policy makers and other institutions in support of transformation projects across the city and to ensure that community engagement and consultation becomes a critical component of any development project that happens in the neighborhoods.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Building on years of existing work, the Foundation for Louisiana (FFL), the coordinating organization for TRHT New Orleans, convened its Advisory Committee who envisioned a culture in which racial healing is a practice in New Orleans. This involved supporting the creation of a community of practice for people doing racial healing work in the city and investing in the leadership of people, particularly people of color – strengthening their capacity and amplifying their voices to create transformative change. They wanted the community of practice to develop in organic ways over time and to sustain its connections long after the TRHT grant ended.

To start, they identified racial healing organizations and practitioners to co-develop the community of practice. Twenty-three people were identified from across racial groups – the majority from the Black, Latinx and Vietnamese communities. Some offer healing services, including spiritual and ancestral guidance, body healing, mental health services and arts therapy. Some are doing racial justice advocacy and policy work in the community. All are committed to

“We’re using circles as the main vehicle to expose the truth of how racism and the design of racism has disinvested in our neighborhoods and caused a lot of the pathologies we sometimes talk about and blame on people. It’s not the people, it’s the systems. We use circles to expose those truths. ... The only way to heal is to come together and put our relationships and our humanity first, ahead of the policies and initiatives. That’s going to be the way in which we’re going to make the changes we need to make.”

- José Rico
  Director
  Greater Chicago TRHT

“Doing work that relates to undoing harm that occurred over generations is very exciting. It has opened up other doors and other avenues of study for the group and for the broader community – like the healing justice movement – and it allows us to connect to the things already happening in New Orleans like other advocacy, activism and movement work. For New Orleans, once the epicenter of the North American Slave Trade, it will be truly exceptional for the community and the world to realize transformative shifts in dismantling racism.”

- Keeta Jackson
  Programs Associate, Racial Justice Program - FFL
  TRHT New Orleans
creating change in New Orleans, dismantling the belief in a hierarchy of human value, and ending racism in the city.

Their goal is to create a culture so that healing is foundational in New Orleans. The work has included dialogues about mindfulness and honoring ancestors, to supporting initiatives that promote people coming together to talk about race and racism. There is now a collective of people interested in making healing services, rituals and practices accessible to the broader New Orleans community. With continued work, trust building and healing can become a cultural practice of the city, much like other cultural practices in New Orleans.

**Lessons**

Ongoing work on racial healing has made a huge difference in the work across TRHT communities. In fact, racial healing is a necessary part of any TRHT implementation to ensure that relationships are strong, and trust is built, so that transformation is sustainable in communities and in the country.

If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Healing before Structure.** Doing the “people work” of racial healing and setting aside space and time to build relationships is essential throughout TRHT implementation. Start by identifying, training and building out your capacity to do this with racial healing practitioners, knowing that this work takes time.
- **Use Racial Healing Circles.** Because of the nature of human development and understanding, racial healing circles create an environment where everyone in the circle is equal. Titles, roles and privilege are stripped away, and each person is called into the circle to build authentic relationships and bring their full sense of humanity.
- **Move at the Pace of Trust.** Be prepared to adapt the pace of your TRHT implementation based on your community’s readiness and what the community needs and wants.
- **Individual Work Matters.** In order to support racial healing work in your community, leaders must do their own ongoing, individual racial healing work.
- **Be the Work.** Practice what you preach and *be* the work. Bring your authentic self to the table and create space that welcomes the same for others.
- **Experiences Matter.** Have most of the people at the table be people impacted daily by the thing they are trying to transform.
- **Don’t Hide from Discomfort or Conflict.** Acknowledge what has happened in the past, learn about it, bring that in and do not hide from it.
- **Take Care of One Another.** There can be a lot of lateral oppression among groups of people that have been hurt and marginalized because of colonization and racism. Give each other grace, but learn to have conversations that can heal misunderstandings and harm.
- **Do No Harm.** Establish a Do No Harm practice or principle to guide your TRHT implementation efforts and prevent further damage and suffering.
About TRHT
The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) launched Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) in 2016 as comprehensive, national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism in the United States. In 2017, fourteen places received WKKF support to implement TRHT in their community using a shared Framework and Implementation Guidebook, co-developed by more than 144 individuals and organizations. TRHT places include: (1) State of Alaska; (2) Baton Rouge and (3) New Orleans, Louisiana; (4) Buffalo, New York; (5) Greater Chicago, Illinois; (6) Dallas, Texas; (7) Los Angeles, California; (8) Richmond, Virginia; (9) Selma, Alabama; (10) Saint Paul, Minnesota; (11) Battle Creek, (12) Flint, (13) Kalamazoo and (14) Metro Lansing, Michigan. Learn more at healourcommunities.org.
Narratives are the stories we tell ourselves about our individual and collective histories. These include stories about race and racism and the ways in which they influence or shape life experiences and outcomes. Too often community members have not heard or are unaware of the history and stories of people different from them. We need complete and complex narratives told about all of our communities to help us recognize the inherent worth and value of all people. We need strong and accessible narratives that advance the values of fairness, compassion, inclusion and justice. We need narratives that not only effectively challenge racial hierarchies and discrimination, but also encourage new ways to live together in multiracial communities.

People of color have been overwhelmingly misrepresented, objectified, stereotyped or made invisible in U.S. media and cultural institutions. As a result, our history and identity have reinforced a hierarchy of human value based on physical characteristics and perceived differences for centuries. We often ignore the profound roles racism and colonization played in establishing the United States. Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) offers a place for communities to speak these uncomfortable truths aloud. This process can be restorative because it acknowledges the pain and suffering caused by racism and the resistance and resilience of those impacted.

An early step to any effective and enduring effort to pursue racial healing and achieve racial equity is developing full and accurate knowledge of the role racism has played in the history and evolution of a community. Work in narrative change examines existing narratives in a community and determines how to create and distribute multifaceted and full narratives in entertainment, journalism, digital and social media, school curricula, museums, monuments and parks and in the ways we communicate. This will influence people’s perspectives, perceptions and behaviors about and towards one another so that we can work more effectively and productively toward change.

**Stories of Action**

**Battle Creek, Michigan**
The Battle Creek Coalition for TRHT has a long-term vision of creating a new multi-racial narrative for Battle Creek so that people of all backgrounds see themselves, their ancestors and their community in local history. Most of the dominant narrative in Battle Creek centers around the two Kellogg brothers, even though the city has a much more complex history that includes the legacy of Native Nations, the Underground Railroad, Sojourner Truth and many others. Work on understanding the local history is key in having a shared understanding of what has occurred, even if individuals within that have had different experiences as a result. Sharing all of that is what builds momentum to move to transformation, to move to relationships that are going to get you to transformation. It’s about using the TRHT framework as it was meant.”

- Kimberly Holley
  Co-Coordinator
  Battle Creek TRHT
stories of perseverance and resiliency across backgrounds. The community identified narrative change as a priority for their TRHT work – in particular, collecting and sharing a more inclusive local history to be incorporated into school curricula so students will be taught a complete history of the area.

They started this work by gathering oral histories, digitizing *Memories from Hamlin* an oral history project which captured personal accounts of the rise and demise of The Bottoms, a mixed-race neighborhood that succumbed to urban renewal and housing practices disproportionately impacting African Americans. Another oral history project – *Battle Creek Did Not Burn* – explores local efforts during the Civil Rights movement. One example is the Black Recondos, a group of young, Black adults who forced the Battle Creek board of education to adopt new hiring practices by threatening to remove all Black students from public schools. It resulted in the hiring of more Black teachers and administrators. They also organized and forced the chief of police to allow them, rather than the local police department, to intervene in arrests of Black people who broke the law, leading to one of the first police force strikes in U.S. history.

The Battle Creek TRHT also started a Racial History Timeline Project to create a collaborative and more expansive account of Battle Creek’s history. Community members contribute stories, historical facts and pivotal events from all racial groups that have shaped local and national history. The timeline begins with the original people, Native Nations, enters colonial America, then focuses on the Battle Creek area from the 1830s through the present. The project launched with the community on the National Day of Racial Healing 2020. It’s gathered contributions at churches, community spaces and racial affinity group meetings throughout the year. The finished product will have many iterations, from a public mural to an online repository and school curricula.

**Los Angeles, California**

TRHT Los Angeles has worked to build understanding of the racialized history of their area, including how that history impacts the economy of the region. Southern California Grantmakers, the coordinating organization for TRHT, started by talking with community members, philanthropy, business and government about the area’s history and what needs to change to have a fully-functioning, equitable economy in the region. It became clear that you cannot work on the economy without also focusing on racial healing and narrative change.

They held a Manzanar Pilgrimage to learn about the active incarceration and unjust treatment of the Japanese-American citizens during World War II at the first concentration camp in the United States. These experiences and history had a lasting economic impact on Japanese Americans. They also held a Tongva History Walk downtown to look at the current and historical impacts of colonization in Los Angeles. And, they learned about the 1871 Chinese Massacre and its ongoing economic impacts on the Chinese-American community.
Originally, TRHT Los Angeles thought their work would focus on creating jobs – but they quickly realized that without understanding the deeply-rooted history of racial injustice embedded in the economy, they would not be able to make lasting change. Increasingly, they found that to transform the economy, they needed to investigate, educate and challenge the systemic, generational barriers for a thriving, equitable economy. Through this deep dive into the history, people that work in the city and county governments, and in philanthropy, have started to point out ways in which their sectors have contributed to systemic racism. Overall, this understanding is leading to opportunities to create change.

**Richmond, Virginia**
Initiatives of Change (IoC) – the coordinating organization for TRHT in Richmond – brought together people interested in uncovering stories about the legacy of enslavement in their community (who they called “weavers”), with those who served as mentors, guides and faculty (“architects”). The weavers created narratives of history, action or healing to unveil and unpack their stories. They came from different backgrounds and told stories through visual art, movement and yoga, documentaries, books and websites. Stories focused on food injustice, wellness, the local history of Black women’s labor, seeing ourselves in a neighborhood that’s starting to gentrify, and obesity and self-esteem among women of color.

Weavers proposed ideas and received mini-grants for their projects. They participated in monthly meetings at different cultural locations where they learned stories about different places around Richmond, checked in on how their projects were going and requested different kinds of support needed. Each weaver previewed their project with the IoC team and invited community members to receive feedback and ideas. Finally, they held an exhibit event to publicly share their projects with the community.

Woven into this narrative change work is a component of racial healing as Alicia Aroche of IoC described, “Art and storytelling is therapeutic without people necessarily having to think about it. Arts-based approaches are universal. Storytelling is action. Storytelling is political. Storytelling helps you take a pause and take a breath. That’s how we see art. It’s not necessarily someone who is a trained painter. It’s someone who can use human approaches to unpacking stories and then connecting with other people in a way that’s universal.”

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- Alicia Aroche
  Director of U.S. Programs,
  Racial Healing & Justice, IoC
  Richmond TRHT

This first phase was a small pilot – and there are plans to expand the work in the future – likely through an expanded approach and collaborative project among storytellers, in collaboration with Transforming Historical Harms, that will allow for both an exploration of historical narratives and intergenerational trauma that comes from them leading to current narratives and for systems change.
**Saint Paul, Minnesota**

In Saint Paul, a group of organizations worked together to create *Truth and Transformation: Changing Racial Narratives in Media*, a two-day media conference for local and statewide media, aimed at changing problematic racial narratives by helping news professionals uncover their own biases and assumptions. Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), KMOJ Radio, Minnesota Humanities Center, Hamline University, Pillsbury United Communities and ThreeSixty Journalism (youth journalism) partnered to create the conference.

At the center of their work, the committee engaged in trust building work. They had never worked together before and there were power dynamics in the room, given the range of organizations participating – from large, well-resourced and nationally known organizations to smaller and minimally-resourced community-led organizations. Racial healing and trust building work was central to creating the collaborative.

"... what was exciting was not only were they doing a conference that would impact the attendees, but among the community organizations, a network started forming."

- Nadege Souvenir
  Saint Paul TRHT

They started out by doing 15 listening sessions across the state of Minnesota to get a collective understanding of racial narratives and the barriers preventing narrative change in Minnesota media. They met with other media professionals, people of color, Indigenous people, representatives from community media and education, and people impacted by crime reporting in the state to gain deeper insights. From this and building on the Minnesota Humanities Center’s “Increase Engagement Through Absent Narratives” training, they designed a two-day training for media professionals.

A mix of 274 educators, student journalists, community and mainstream journalists, representatives from philanthropy, equity administration and the general public across Minnesota attended the conference. Not only did the conference impact attendees, but a network started forming among the partners who can help change the narratives being told across the state. Students from ThreeSixty Journalism did tours at MPR to meet some of the journalists there. The cohort continues to find opportunities to work together since the conference, and many of the participants have taken on related internal work as well.

**Lessons**

Foundational to all TRHT implementation is a focused effort on narrative change. If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Identify Narratives & Integrate Narrative Change.** Be strategic about the role narrative plays in TRHT work. Integrate narrative change efforts throughout so that you can make the biggest impact across the board.

- **Build Intentional Partnerships.** Be intentional about your TRHT partners. Some TRHTs partner with longstanding organizations like the public library and use their platform because they touch a cross-section of the community. Some partner with local history groups to find information that’s buried in archives. Forming intentional partnerships helps you embed narrative change into your community so that people do business differently as a result.
• **Make it Participatory & Collaborative.** Consider a participatory process to identify narratives and an actual collaborative to develop them. Encourage a process that gives people opportunities to work together and see how the story they want to tell unfolds. Then think about some of the systems-level challenges and where those stories can help alleviate that harm.

• **Share Leadership.** In some TRHT communities, what worked really well was having a group of partners that all led a different piece of the work rather than one organization leading it.

• **Seek Out Voices & Listen.** Some TRHT communities used listening sessions where they went and identified communities to talk with to ensure they were getting a full range of voices and stories.

• **Acknowledge Multi-Generational Impacts.** People often think that because something happened in the past, it does not have a lasting impression. In doing this work, it becomes clear that history from hundreds of years ago has multi-generational impact. Expect to encounter those impacts, reflect on them and investigate. If you do not acknowledge these impacts, it will be hard to do the work of now in a way that will make a difference or be transformative.

• **Take Your Time.** Forming and maintaining strong partnerships takes time and there’s a process to do it well. Don’t forget to give yourself time in your work plans for building authentic relationships and partnerships.

• **Do No Harm.** Establish a Do No Harm practice or implementation principle to guide your narrative change efforts. You especially want to avoid perpetuating dominant, colonial and racist narratives that could cause further damage and suffering.

**About TRHT**

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Colonization and segregation by racial category are defining features of American culture, institutions and systems. At their root is a belief in a hierarchy of human value – the perception of inferiority or superiority based on race, physical characteristics or place of origin. From this false belief grew a tangle of laws, policies, preferences, procedures and actions by government, private institutions and individuals that harmed people, prevented and destroyed relationships and kept people apart from one another.

Forced segregation, in particular, separates people from those whose cultures, experiences and social and economic status differ from their own, perpetuating stereotypes, prejudice and bias. Because systemic separation and racial discrimination disproportionately offer economic benefits to Whites and disadvantage people of color, it concentrates poverty and affluence. Over centuries, laws, policies, practices and beliefs cut off Black and Brown communities from the resources, power, conditions and opportunities that contribute to well-being and self-determination. Similarly, when racism motivated White people to cut off or limit Native Nations and Indigenous people from the rights and resources to sustain an economy, maintain independent governance or the essential infrastructure of society, this increased benefits for White society and sustained concentrated poverty in Indian Country. Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) work related to separation finds ways to address forced segregation, colonization and concentrated poverty in neighborhoods and communities to ultimately ensure equitable access to health, well-being, education and jobs.

Stories of Action

Baton Rouge, Louisiana
TRHT Baton Rouge is disrupting the systems that separate and alienate people of color by partnering with organizations working on the front lines to dismantle structural racism. The Foundation for Louisiana (FFL), the coordinating organization for TRHT, partnered with the YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge to launch LEAD, a leadership development training focused on housing equity and police reform. The LEAD housing equity work emerged from a housing summit in 2018 where people explored solutions to housing affordability, housing instability and homeownership disparities in the parish. The training equipped residents with the tools and skills to engage in advocacy and grassroots organizing.

“…advancing the TRHT Framework by investing and amplifying the voices of leaders of color, building capacity for the work and collaborating with communities to create strategies that build Black and Brown power. People are working together to transform their communities. They are embedding acknowledgement of past harms, storytelling and power building while pushing against the false narratives about communities of color in Baton Rouge.”

- Laquitta Bowers
  Program Associate, FFL
  TRHT Baton Rouge
From there, the LEAD cohort decided to implement a campaign focused on renter protection against retaliatory evictions. Members checked in regularly and did fieldwork to get the word out about the issue and garner support. Though they have not changed policy yet, the cohort built an organizing muscle and a trusted network of people across the state dedicated to housing equity.

TRHT Baton Rouge is also building a platform for immigrants’ rights in the region. Recognizing a lack of visibility of the immigrant community in Baton Rouge, FFL convened community members, advocates, activists and organizations from surrounding parishes to address the unmet needs of immigrants and create a positive narrative about their role in the community. Members of the Baton Rouge Immigrants’ Rights Coalition (BRIRC) created a strategy, compiled and reviewed data about the Latinx community and developed an outreach toolkit. BRIRCs interest in immigration and detainees at the U.S. border galvanized the group to start a campaign to end the 287(g) agreement in Baton Rouge, which gives local police officers the authority to perform immigration enforcement functions in collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

They created an online petition with more than 500 signatories and presented it to the sheriff to send a message about the importance of the issue in the immigrant community. However, he renewed the agreement with ICE and was recently reelected. The coalition is in the process of revising its strategy. BRIRC also continues its work on relationship and trust building, base building, policy advocacy and developing leaders.

**Flint, Michigan**

In Flint, part of the TRHT work focuses on the impact systemic racism has on affordable and public housing. Building on research and work the city has done, the Community Foundation of Greater Flint, the coordinating organization for TRHT, concentrated on an effort funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods program. A local public housing complex was to be demolished because it had been illegally built on a flood plain. Families living in the complex have an opportunity to move into a brand-new housing area made up of mixed-income housing being constructed between two other active neighborhoods in another part of the city. For the first time, residents will have access to small businesses, transportation, better schools, jobs and other services, creating a neighborhood that residents will choose to move into.

While HUD builds the new buildings and establishes wrap-around services in the community, the Flint TRHT’s focus is on building relationships among residents of the three communities, work that has seldom been the focus of redevelopment efforts. These relationships are essential for reducing flight and helping residents work together to create a neighborhood that is welcoming to all.

Consultants helped Flint TRHT bring residents together from the three neighborhoods with city planning staff, contractors and staff from organizations providing wrap-around services. They held racial healing circles, quickly realizing the amount of trauma in the room. This led to continued and deeper work on relationship building. Healing circles were initially held for each of the three communities separately and are beginning to happen across communities. They are moving at the pace that makes the most sense for the community, and they are clear about the need to build trust first. They will soon be running the exercise *Star Power*, a simulation exercise that highlights social power in society.
Selma, Alabama

Taking community dynamics into consideration, separation work in Selma has focused in three areas: genealogy, relationship building and work in local public schools. *Know Your Roots* is a genealogical-based project that focuses on people across race and culture, with the aim of understanding shared roots and common humanity. Participants in Selma TRHT are reading the book *Gather at the Table*, including work with authors Sharon Kane and Thomas DeWolf and the Black Belt African-American Genealogical and Historical Society. There’s a year-long DNA sampling process where people are learning about their roots, including Republican and Democratic state senators. Participants have also gone through a “Middle Passage Reenactment” with Afriye Wekandodis.

*These kids are in pain. That’s the bottom line. Punishing them doesn’t help address the pain. So, we’re trying to deal with the pain.*

- Ainka Sanders Jackson
  Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation
  Selma TRHT

The first and third Thursday of every month, Selma TRHT hosts “Chat and Chews” in either the back room of a local coffee shop or through an online video platform to reach a wider audience and enable youth participation. Chat and Chews are conversation circles that intentionally bring together racially and ideologically diverse people to safely and privately discuss issues of racial healing and transformation. After these circles, participants often share reflections through blog posts or op-eds in the local paper.

In Selma’s public schools, both the TRHT Separation and Law Design Teams came together through a joint effort focused on restorative justice, nonviolent conflict reconciliation and conflict resolution. A local junior high school had been struggling to come off the failing school list because of school dynamics and behavioral issues. The TRHT efforts focused on addressing conflict, trauma and pain among students and giving teachers and families what they need instead of punishing them. The work started by training parents, teachers, the superintendent, school administrators, board and staff to hold restorative circles explicitly focusing on race in the junior high school. Over time, the superintendent (the co-lead of the TRHT Separation Design Team) wants to expand the circles to the high school, the sixth-grade school and eventually all the schools in Selma. The goal is to make Selma a restorative community by focusing on healing and building relationships across currently segregated communities.

**Lessons**

Transforming communities so that they are not forcefully kept separate from one another requires changing narratives and building trusting relationships across difference and racial groups. It also requires examining the beliefs, policies and practices that keep us separate. If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Honor Difference.** Celebrating our common humanity is essential to TRHT efforts. And, at the same time, we cannot minimize what makes us unique and different. It is essential that you create space for shared humanity and honor difference.
- **Context Matters.** Understand your community’s context, listen to the community, build consensus and create access points for civic participation.
- **Reassess as Necessary.** It’s okay to step back and try something different if you notice what you thought might work isn’t working. One TRHT started conducting community organizing trainings only to realize that there might be better ways to organize folks when participants lost their energy.
• **Look for Research.** Consider the research that exists around community development and public housing and the shifts. Build a good understanding of the dynamics around it.

• **Consult with Experts.** Seek consultation from experts in the field. Some TRHTs put resources toward that. It is important to have resources and coaching.

• **Learn Together.** Spend time doing education about systems and the impact of systems on neighborhoods – not just with staff in the TRHT coordinating organization, but with residents. Spend more time putting that up front in the process.

• **Participate in Racial Healing.** The racial healing work is not just for other people. Every person has to do their own work.

• **Connect with Other Design Teams.** It is really important to weave together the work of the different design teams. Separation and isolation are bad for the community as a whole – and they are bad for the design teams, too.

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The United States’ founding colonial documents perpetuate a false belief in a hierarchy of human value – the perception of inferiority or superiority based on race, physical characteristics or place of origin. This belief is embedded in federal and state constitutions and the criminal and civil laws, practices and policies derived from them. Addressing the law and how it is enforced at local, state, tribal and federal levels is crucial to dismantling the belief in hierarchy. Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) efforts related to the law explore alternatives for producing a system of law that honors the dignity of all people, upholds the civil and human rights of all, encourages and requires full civic participation, and remedies inequities in the current legal system.

**Stories of Action**

**Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

African American men comprise most of the prison population in Baton Rouge parish. Many people cannot afford bail, so people are often locked up for months until either formally charged or, if the prosecutor decides not to file charges, released. This harms the whole family, resulting in the loss of jobs, income, health insurance, housing and custody of children. It also furthers the racial trauma carried by African American and immigrant communities. Empirical data shows that cash bail is often set at levels out of reach for the working poor and Black and Brown communities. There is a growing movement in Baton Rouge and throughout the U.S. to fight the injustices of the bail system. To disrupt this system, the Baton Rouge TRHT supported the YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge’s bail, fees and fines work to end cash bail for people charged with nonviolent offenses in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The YWCA established this community fund to help release people otherwise unable to pay bail and to share their stories to reinforce the work to end cash bail. Once someone is bailed out and the case has been resolved, their bond money goes back into the fund to help others in the same situation. As of April 2020, the YWCA Community Bail Fund had assisted 27 clients with bail and provided referrals to community resources.

To create buy-in for this work and to build trust with the court and local public officials, it was critical to cultivate good working relationships and shift the public narrative so the parish will change its approach to bail. The YWCA secured additional funding and donations to continue the Bail Fund Program. There is a draft ordinance to end cash bail – and the staff is working to build support and obtain the votes for its passage.

“...because of community champions, like the YWCA and other organizations, we’re seeing incremental changes to bail reform. And that means people don’t have to be trapped in jail. They can actually be released and continue in their work or be at home with their families until their case is resolved. For Baton Rouge, that’s a long time coming.”

- Laquitta Bowers
  Program Associate,
  Foundation for Louisiana
  TRHT Baton Rouge
Before this work by the YWCA and criminal justice and community activist partners, those arrested were often held for 5-12 weeks in the overcrowded and dilapidated parish prison. Through community pressure, criminal justice officials approved a faster arraignment process in October 2019 that calls for charges to be presented, or prosecutors to release people, within 72 hours of arrest.

Buffalo, New York

In Buffalo, the coordinating organization for TRHT, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo (CFGB), convened the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable, an unprecedented cross-sector collaboration of 36 community leaders, to advance racial equity in western New York. Together, they identified the overarching goal of achieving an expanded inclusive economy and created a 10-point agenda. The roundtable spent a year listening to the community about how they could remove systemic barriers and help people get jobs. The reentry system was identified. So, they convened a Reentry Coalition – more than 50 federal, state, county, city and local partners – to assess the current local reentry ecosystem. They quickly learned that Buffalo had an 82% recidivism rate and set a goal of improving outcomes for reentering citizens so they can move forward with their lives.

At the table were the courts, county governments, mental health agencies, the sheriff’s office, law enforcement, community-based organizations and advocates, as well as residents with lived experience. A consulting team shared best practices and the coalition quickly decided that they wanted to create a one-stop reentry hub for returning citizens.

The Reentry Coalition, co-chaired by the county commissioner of mental health and the superintendent of the County Holding Center, identified the Reentry Hub as its top priority. Ron Schoelerman of the Erie County Department of Mental Health led the Service Link Stop (Hub) effort and worked collaboratively to create a beautiful and welcoming place that coordinates services and helps reentering citizens achieve their short and long-term goals. To prepare for supporting reentering citizens, each organization in the coalition takes Racial Equity Impact Analysis trainings, which the community foundation brought to more than 80 organizations and more than 1800 leaders in the Buffalo area. During the trainings, organizations receive a shared history and language about racial equity in the community and tools for thinking about decisions and practices through a racial equity lens.

“The Reentry Coalition also focused on changing the narrative from talking about post-incarceration to ex-offenders to reentering citizens. The local public broadcasting station is doing stories about reentry for the next year. They work closely with the Reentry Coalition to make sure they are getting the story correct – asking for help to make sure they are telling the full, true, authentic story.

The Service Link Stop is opening 40 yards from where people are released. There will be providers on-site to coordinate a comprehensive package of services supporting a unified case management system. Other amenities include an employment wall with job postings, information about where to get clothes for interviews and a phone bank to make free calls and learn about free cell service will also be available. Most importantly, the coalition is creating a safe space to build trusting relationships so that reentering citizens can reenter society successfully and find employment.

“It's a link to the services and the resources that they will need to return to society, coming from that correctional setting, but also to reenter their communities with success.”
- Ron Schoelerman
Erie County Department of Mental Health
Lansing, Michigan
Working collectively with community members and representatives from the legal system, TRHT of Metro Lansing is focused on reducing inequities in the legal system, especially for people ages 16-25. They began by listening to the experiences of youth and mining local arrest data to identify how to approach transformation.

They found that while Black youth are approximately 20% of the youth population of Lansing, they represent more than 70% of the arrests. One barrier they identified was that data collected by prosecutors was not disaggregated by race, which meant they were unable to determine if there are disparities or inequities resulting from prosecutorial investigations, charging, plea deals and sentencing recommendations.

The local prosecutor, a member of the TRHT Law Design Team, heard the data and said she was in a position to do something. So, TRHT of Metro Lansing has been working with the prosecutor’s office and about 30 assistant prosecutors for the past year. They started by exploring implicit bias through the Implicit Association Test and then moved into an organizational assessment. The Implicit Association Test was helpful in challenging assumptions people had and opening conversations about the power prosecutors have.

From there, the prosecutor’s office began using their power to produce more racially equitable outcomes. They reviewed their policies and procedures to see where bias might be creeping in and created teams to identify how current practices might be masking bias. TRHT of Metro Lansing also began exploring how to develop a tool to help prosecutors apply a racial equity lens as they review cases.

TRHT of Metro Lansing approached the work with prosecutors from the perspective that they hold significant influence in shaping law enforcement and judicial policy and practice. They call them The Justice League. Based on this work and the deep commitment of the prosecutor to racial equity, the Vera Institute of Justice awarded Ingham County Prosecutors with a technical assistance grant.

All members of the Law Design Team, including the prosecutor, have participated in racial healing circles, helping them deepen trust and strengthen relationships. Said Angela Waters-Austin of One Love Global, the coordinating organization for TRHT of Metro Lansing, “Tapping into our connections on a deeper, more human level is really important. People feel more connected with one another. The healing circles connect us in a deeper way.”

“We have a prosecutor who is making this commitment, even though she’s an elected official. I look forward to the opportunity to elevate her as a champion. When leaders step forward in that way as risk takers, it encourages others to take a bold step.”

- Angela Waters-Austin
  President & CEO
  One Love Global
  TRHT of Metro Lansing
Lessons
Transformation in the legal system requires building trusting relationships and changing narratives. It also requires examining ways in which the system is built on a belief that some groups of people are more valuable (or less valuable) than others – and creating new practices to get rid of those beliefs. If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Find Trusted Partners.** It is critically important to find the right partners to lead the work – people with a track record in building collaborations and having a deep commitment to authentic community engagement.
- **Replicate Collaborative Energy.** One of the most important things to replicate is collaborative energy. It’s critical to carefully identify mutual self-interest among coalition members. You need to respect the different partners and address the things they want to accomplish, while having a shared goal you are working toward as a group. Create a safe space to build trusting relationships.
- **Let Those Most Directly Impacted Lead.** You must be willing to go where the people who are most directly impacted lead you.
- **Create Systems of Support.** Build in your own systems of support and self-care because while much of the work is uplifting and feels good, you’re constantly confronted by the reality that tensions are growing and polarization is getting wider, so somebody is being harmed.
- **Be Prepared for Rapid Response.** Be thoughtful on the front end about supporting people and build in rapid response when incidents arise. People will not take you seriously about racial equity and healing if something happens and you do not show up.
- **Authentically Work Together.** You can do things that look good, but be sure that you’re actually organizing together, building strategy together and that the response is what people actually need.

About TRHT
The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) launched Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) in 2016 as comprehensive, national and community-based process to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism in the United States. In 2017, fourteen places received WKKF support to implement TRHT in their community using a shared Framework and Implementation Guidebook, co-developed by more than 144 individuals and organizations. TRHT places include: (1) State of Alaska; (2) Baton Rouge and (3) New Orleans, Louisiana; (4) Buffalo, New York; (5) Greater Chicago, Illinois; (6) Dallas, Texas; (7) Los Angeles, California; (8) Richmond, Virginia; (9) Selma, Alabama; (10) Saint Paul, Minnesota; (11) Battle Creek, (12) Flint, (13) Kalamazoo and (14) Metro Lansing, Michigan. Learn more at healourcommunities.org.
In a capitalist society, systems are driven by and exploit a belief in a hierarchy of human value – the perception of inferiority or superiority based on race, physical characteristics or place of origin. This belief shows up most prominently in the treatment of workers, including farmworkers, domestic workers and the enslaved. Historically, and still today, financial gain has driven the annihilation of Indigenous people, the enslavement of Africans, the exclusion of certain immigrant groups and the exploitation of Black and Brown people in the labor force.

Communities implementing a Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) process work toward an economy that eliminates all traces of the racial and ethnic discrimination that pervades jobs, housing, education, health care, credit, government services and other aspects of the economy at the national, tribal, regional, state and local levels. They work toward a thriving economy in which diverse people have equal and fair access to resources and opportunities and are positioned to influence systems and policies that impact their lives. Through TRHT, communities are carefully studying structured inequities and barriers to economic opportunities – whether in employment, wealth-creation, tax structure, immigration, education and/or human development – and implementing new approaches, infrastructures and policies for an equitable society.

**Stories of Action**

**Buffalo, New York**

The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, a coordinating organization for their local TRHT, has been working to advance racial equity and expand an inclusive economy for many years. They convened the [Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable](#) who produced the [Racial Equity Dividend Report](#) in 2016, which used local data to share the history and existing opportunity gaps across 16 indicators in four domains – education and job readiness, criminal justice, neighborhoods, and income and wealth.

When Buffalo received a TRHT grant in July 2017, the roundtable built on this work and did a listening tour in order to, as Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo President and CEO Clotilde Dedecker describes it, “identify the sectors and systems that were pregnant with opportunity to advance racial equity and that also had barriers to progress.” The top priority that emerged focused on employers in the business sector. Starting slowly, the roundtable power mapped and identified relationships roundtable members had with key CEOs of these major employers. They looked for the top six or so people that have an interest in and aptitude for advancing racial equity. Of the eight they invited to the Business Leaders Task Force, all accepted and four more have joined since that time. They represent 12 of the largest 25 employers in the region.
The Business Leaders Task Force convened and reviewed data, including the data in the Racial Equity Dividend Report. They were charged with leading, within their own organizations and with their peers, to advance racial equity. The community foundation shared with them data, promising practices and research on why addressing these issues matters for business, then opened the discussion for business leaders to identify what they individually and/or collectively wanted to tackle. The task force decided they wanted to change their purchasing practice – changing from purchasing from large suppliers to increasing their local spend with businesses of color in order to build wealth in the community.

The community foundation and other foundation partners pooled resources to analyze market demand – to identify the sectors that all 12 companies engaged in and the opportunities where all, or most, were spending. They then developed a database, mapping local businesses of color to those areas (IT, marketing and communication, construction, etc.) The foundation brought in other philanthropic partners to support a full analysis of the data – and then the members of the task force funded a two-year pilot to determine how best to build their capacity, and build new policies and practices to increase their spend with local businesses owned by people of color.

By the end of the first year, 45% of the businesses changed their policies and practices. They set goals for the first year – doubling that first-year goal. The task force created the Buffalo Purchasing Initiative, with full-time staff to help them succeed and to create matchmaker events so that local businesses owned by people of color and the task force members can determine how best to work together. So far, they have created a database of 380 businesses owned by people of color in the region. Eventually, that information will be in a form that can be shared with the community. Buffalo TRHT is clear that this is only the beginning.

**Selma, Alabama**

In 2019, 41% of Selma residents were living below the poverty line, more than three times the national average. When community members developed a vision and plan for the economy as part of Selma TRHT, they determined that creating sustainable tourism is a central part of shifting the economy and could drive economic recovery in the region. A Sustainable Tourism Roundtable was created, bringing together people from all parts of the tourism industry (tour guides, museums, hotels, small businesses, restaurants) to work together on a strategy to get tourists to stay and spend money locally, and ultimately to create jobs in Selma. Currently, tourists come to Selma and take keepsake pictures of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but they do not stay or spend money in Selma. The roundtable determined that lighting the bridge, while seemingly a small thing, could be one way to create a sense of hope in the community – and would create a reason for visitors to stay in Selma. The bridge would be visible day and night, allowing for both daytime and evening activities around this historic landmark.

Selma TRHT is also training women in financial literacy through The Power of Her. And they’re building people power through the Beloved Community Block Club Initiative to address concerns about gentrification and displacement, as tourism, downtown redevelopment and riverfront development grows in their “Opportunity Zone.” Through the block club, they’re building a sustainable organizing model, nurturing a sense of community and deepening understanding about why a strong community is critical to improving the local economy.
Through a regranting process, the Black Belt Community Foundation (BBCF), a coordinating organization for Selma TRHT (with its partner the Selma Center for Nonviolence, Truth and Reconciliation), supports people to start, grow and develop local businesses. In 2020, they gave a small grant to a local Black, woman-owned enterprise that is building on prior restaurant experience to launch a mobile food truck restaurant in a city where it’s been very difficult to keep a brick and mortar restaurant open. BBCF also gave a small grant to House of Praise, a house of worship that is running a summer business project for youth to learn how to operate a small snow cone shop, build and manage personal savings and reinvest in the business.

Daron Harris, public relations director of BBCF and TRHT Selma co-chair, described that “several other grants addressing the local economy and local businesses owned and operated by Black, female entrepreneurs were also funded, along with a discretionary grant to the Economy Design Team, which will give five additional economic microgrants.” Through these small grants, Selma TRHT is working to provide examples of small business opportunities and cooperative programs that will positively affect the local economy.

The Selma TRHT Economy Design Team is also working with The Democracy Collaborative, an organization with a focus on making a democratic economy in Cleveland, Ohio and across the country. Through that partnership, Selma is convening local anchor businesses, and will be helping create cooperatives and small businesses so that procurement dollars are used locally to support emerging businesses owned by people of color and individuals with limited wealth. In Cleveland, the work included supporting local cooperatives to provide solar energy for anchor businesses, a farm to provide food for schools and the local hospital, and laundry services for the hospitals and schools.

The Design Team’s plans for shifting the local economy will be presented and further incubated at an upcoming Selma Economy Summit. The Summit will highlight companies in Selma that pay higher wages and thus have better retention rates. For example, the local hospital, struggling to address retention issues, decided to pay its employees higher wages. Because of that, they’ve been able to retain staff, which means they can provide better services. Improved services mean more people use the hospital, which helps the bottom line. Examples like this one might encourage other local businesses to increase wages.

Finally, Selma TRHT is working with Dr. Sekou Franklin from Middle Tennessee State University and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists to analyze economic power and understand the local economy. In several ways, Dr. Franklin’s effort will replicate a study by W.E.B. Dubois in the Black Belt of Alabama that was destroyed before being released. The results will identify the major families and people with wealth in Selma. Critical to shifting the economy is building economic power to match the political power that’s been built in Selma for the Black community. The community identified transforming the economy as key to making Selma a city with opportunity for all and is taking concrete steps to do so.
Lessons
Creating a thriving economy in which diverse people and communities have equal and fair access to resources and opportunities is essential to implementing TRHT. If you are considering a TRHT process in your community, consider these lessons from the first 14 communities implementing TRHTs:

- **Centering Relationships is Vital.** Having trusted partners in the work is essential. It takes time to develop trust and relationships. Do not rush the process because trust has to be earned.
- **Build On-ramps.** Leverage existing relationships with people that have demonstrated an inclination toward community transformation. Focus on those that need on-ramps to be part of the solution and build those on-ramps. Let business leaders lead and let them choose the strategies they want to work on in their respective workplaces.
- **Share Data & Best Practices.** Collect and share data, options and best practices with those you collaborate with. Consider starting with *The Business Case for Racial Equity*. Engage the community in learning about the possibilities.
- **The Right and Smart Thing.** People generally want to do the right thing. And when they learn it is also the smart thing for their business and the community, they will be there.
- **Systems are Comprised of People.** You cannot separate yourself from the work. Lasting and impactful policy changes require the people within those systems to also be personally transformed, because people are actually responsible for implementing and sustaining the practices that follow from the policies.
- **Invest and Reinvest in Your Community.** If you receive funding from outside of your community to do the work of TRHT, commit to keeping those dollars in your local community. Investing and reinvesting in your community is part of what makes transformation possible.
- **Context matters.** In Buffalo, the community decided that shifting the purchasing model was going to have the greatest potential impact. In Selma, the opportunity was in tourism. Take your time talking with your community to determine what’s best for everyone.

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