

# Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative (NUARI)



NUARI WORKING GROUP  
PUBLIC MEETING

JANUARY 25, 2021  
6:00 PM

## Launch of NUARI

In July 2020, the Select Board launched the Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative (NUARI) to foster a dialogue about racism in Needham and produce actionable strategies to ensure Needham is a welcoming and inclusive community. This included a [listening session](#) for community members who wished to share with Town officials their personal experiences with racism in Needham, their concerns, and suggestions for improvement.

This initiative is intended to be an ongoing effort so that together, Town leadership and residents can craft effective solutions to identified challenges. The Town is committed to ensuring that all residents of Needham are safe and free from racism, discrimination and hate.

In October, a NUARI Working Group was formed to continue the next phase of this work.

# Working Group Members

## Members:

- Ramin Abrishamian, Member Needham Clergy Association
- Matthew Borrelli, Select Board Vice Chair
- Marianne Cooley, Select Board Member, NUARI Chair
- Natasha Espada, Resident
- Dr. Olutoyin Fayemi, Resident
- Vivian Hsu, Resident
- Jen Howard, Needham Human Rights Committee
- Sue Neckes, School Committee
- Marcus Nelson, Needham Human Rights Committee
- Jay Spencer, owner, French Press
- Dennis Zhang, Resident

## Staff:

- Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager
- Katie King, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Operations

## NUARI Working Group Charge

1. Articulating a recommended vision for racial equity in Needham and guiding principles that will inform future actions.
2. Establishing protocols and practices for getting community feedback, with a specific focus on engaging Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and others who have been marginalized due to their race or ethnicity. Strategies should be identified to keep Needham's racial equity work informed by BIPOC input but owned by Town leadership and the broader community.
3. Setting up communication structures to ensure the sustainability and accountability of the Initiative.
4. Discussing and prioritizing other recommendations that have been submitted to the Select Board.
5. Making recommendation to the Select Board about future action.

## Work To Date\*

- [10/20/2020](#) – Overview of NUARI and the Working Group  
Discussion of Operational Questions
- [11/09/2020](#) – Survey Results for Priority Areas of Interest  
Discussion of Facilitator for Vision Planning
- [11/16/2020](#) – Vision Setting Session 1 with Lisa Smith-McQueenie
- [12/07/2020](#) – Vision Setting Session 2
- [12/21/2020](#) – NPS REAL Coalition presentation, Superintendent Dan Gutekanst
- [01/04/2021](#) – Vision Setting Session 3
- [01/11/2021](#) – Discussion with Police Chief John Schlittler  
Vision Setting Session 4

\* Each date is linked to that meeting's video recording on YouTube.

# Vision Setting Facilitator: Lisa Smith- McQueenie

## PROFESSIONAL ATTRIBUTES:

- Expert administrator, trainer and facilitator.
- Committed thought leader invested in community culture, equity and inclusion.
- Collaborative and practiced leader oriented to integrating theory and practice.

EXPERIENCE: Lisa has held numerous roles at Simmons University from 2003-2020 including Assistant Vice President, Organizational Culture, Inclusion, & Equity and Associate Dean for Student Life.

## EDUCATION:

- All doctoral coursework completed (personality/social psychology)
- Master of Arts (Experimental Psychology) - Northeastern University, Boston, MA
- Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) - Hampton University, Hampton, VA

# Vision Setting Facilitation Process

## Facilitation process to date:

- Majority time on vision statement
- Remaining time on guiding principles
- Just started discussing intentional practices

## Next Steps:

- 1/25/2021 – Public Hearing, feedback also welcome via this [online survey](#) or by e-mailing [nuari@needhamma.gov](mailto:nuari@needhamma.gov)
- 2/8/2021 – NUARI Working Group Meeting – discussion and vote on final recommendation to the Select Board
- 2/9/2021 – Select Board Meeting – discussion on NUARI recommended vision and guiding principles

# Draft Vision Statement for Racial Equity in Needham

***Needham will be a community free of racism, racial bias, prejudice and discrimination. Our residents, schools, businesses, organizations and government will work together to identify barriers and create solutions, opportunities, resources and support leading to racial equity.***

- We will work collaboratively and democratically toward a just, equitable, antiracist community.
- We will work to identify and change policies, procedures, practices, and cultural norms that exist in Needham that prevent meaningful access to opportunities because of race.
- We will create opportunities for the community to confront unpleasant truths and seek solutions that always amplify values of racial equity.
- We will intentionally create spaces for respectful dialogue and difficult conversations toward racial amity.
- We will actively engage with those who feel the impact of racism most directly, seeking their input, guidance, and honoring the wisdom of their experience.
- We will commit as individuals to be intentional in our efforts to learn and practice anti-bias and antiracism, transforming our thinking, attitudes and behaviors.



# Draft Guiding Principles for Future Action

(Slide 1 of 2)

1. Racial equity in Needham means that experiences in Needham are the same for people of color as well as the white majority. This ranges from day-to-day interactions, housing opportunities, policing experiences, employment, and educational opportunities, etc.
  - a. You will see people who look like you in leadership roles in the government, in business, in the schools, and civic groups.
  - b. Students young and old have opportunities to learn a more full version of "American History" and its relevance to today's challenges; students in schools will experience discipline meted out fairly and justly for everyone.
  - c. No particular race or person of color would have an unequal number of traffic stops and summons relative to the white population in town.
  - d. All races would want to live here - we would be a desirable community for everyone.
  
2. Needham will be a town where the color of your skin does not dictate your experiences and there is a united front against racial injustice.
  - a. All races are accepted, welcomed, able to succeed - certainly not blocked from opportunity.
  - b. The color of your skin does not lead others to make assumptions about you.
  - c. Residents will feel safe and validated and there is accountability in all processes.
  - d. The voices of people of color will be amplified honoring their experiences without invalidation or discrediting due to a majority white experience.

# Draft Guiding Principles for Future Action

(Slide 2 of 2)

3. A healthy community recognizes the harm created by implicit bias, intolerance and racism and strives to embrace diversity and inclusion by using a racial equity lens to promote anti-racist behaviors and attitudes in all aspects of civic and inter-personal living.
4. We value lifelong/ongoing self and group learning and critical social analysis to acknowledge and further understand throughout US history, the dominance of white culture and privilege and the importance of disrupting racial structures that perpetuate it.
5. In becoming anti-racist, we must tackle our own implicit bias, intolerance and discriminatory lenses to bring about restorative justice, healing and reconciliation to truly bring together the community we live in.

# Draft Intentional Practices

**Supporting the following intentional practices will help Needham realize the vision for racial equity:**

- Self education to have a better understanding of and be more informed about race, racism, racial equity, race amity, and race relations.
- Foster safe environments for, and listen to residents who are, directly affected by racism and racial inequities.
- Engage in meaningful and productive conversations on racial issues with town/community members.
- Support services, materials, expertise, scholarships, and organizations that advocate for racial equity.
- Stand up, speak out, and act against racism and racial injustice.
- Encourage vision, transformation and advocacy anchored in democratic action.
- Popularize the need to eliminate racial injustice.

# Public Comment.

We want to  
hear from you.

Opportunities to provide feedback:

- 1. Speak during this meeting.** Please raise your hand and we will take people in the order in which hands are raised. Please keep your remarks to 3 minutes so everyone who wants to speak may do so.
  - In Zoom, click on the icon labeled "Participants" at the bottom center of your computer or phone screen.
  - At the bottom of the window, click the button labeled "Raise Hand."
- 2. Fill out our online form via this link or the QR code below** (responses can be anonymous): <https://tinyurl.com/NUARIVisionStatement>
- 3. E-mail** your comments to [NUARI@needhamma.gov](mailto:NUARI@needhamma.gov)

