

Needham Unite Against Racism Working Group
DRAFT Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, and Intentional Practices
February 8, 2021

Vision Statement

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 to racial equity and create solutions, opportunities, resources and support for removing them.

- We will work collaboratively and democratically toward a just, equitable, antiracist community.
- We will work to identify and change current policies, procedures, practices, and cultural norms 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.

Guiding Principles

3. A healthy and equitable 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 to further understand the dominance of white culture and privilege throughout US history, and the importance of disrupting racial structures that perpetuate it.
5. Becoming anti-racist means that we must tackle our own implicit bias, intolerance and discriminatory lenses - thus, bringing about restorative justice, healing and reconciliation to truly bring together the community we live in.

Guiding Principles Under Discussion

1. Racial equity in Needham means that the experiences of people of color are the same as those of the white majority - from day to day interactions, housing opportunities, interactions with the police and other first responders, employment, and educational opportunities, etc.
 - a. People of color will see those who look like you in the leadership roles in government, business, the school system, and civic groups.
 - b. Students young and old have opportunities to learn a more complete version of American history and its relevance to today's challenges.
 - c. Students in schools will experience discipline administered fairly and justly for everyone.
 - d. People of color will not be disproportionately represented in the number of traffic stops and citations
 - e. All races would want to live here - Needham 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.

Intentional Practices Under Discussion

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.
- Encourage and build public understanding of the need to eliminate racial injustice.