

<b>The Race Debate</b>		
<b>Contested Questions</b>	<b>Colorblindness Perspective</b> <b>(Denies seeing race or racism)</b>	<b>Racial Justice Awareness Perspective</b> <b>(Acknowledges &amp; challenges racism)</b>
<b>Does Racism Exist?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism is mostly a thing of the past, except rare, extreme cases.</li> <li>• Social inequalities are based on income or other factors, not race.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism routinely results in current widespread and dramatic racial inequalities.</li> <li>• Race is a major determinant of income, social status and life opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>What is Racism?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism is individual bias, prejudice, bigotry or hatred between people of different races.</li> <li>• Racism is willful, prejudicial intent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racism is a system of race-based inequality and hierarchy permeating institutions across our society. Structural racism in the U.S. is based on white domination, providing more advantage and access to whites, while disadvantaging and excluding people of color.</li> <li>• Racism is the unequal impacts or outcomes across race, regardless of intent.</li> </ul>
<b>Who's Responsible?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme bigots (like the KKK) and the "bad apples" (like rogue cops).</li> <li>• People of color who act like victims and "play the race card."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unequal institutions – made up of policies, practices and power holders – in a system of white domination.</li> <li>• Individuals who use their racial privilege, consciously or not, for access and advantage at the expense of others.</li> </ul>
<b>What's to be done?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing – slavery was abolished, and discrimination is illegal. People just need to "get over it" and "get on with it."</li> <li>• "Colorblindness" is the answer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional accountability, policy changes, and racial impact assessments are needed to produce and measure racial equity.</li> <li>• Ongoing race consciousness and anti-racist action are needed for racial justice.</li> </ul>

<b>“Colorblind” or “Racial Justice” Perspective</b> <b>...it’s all in the Eyes (I’s)</b>	
<b>“Colorblind Perspective”</b> (denies seeing race or racism) <b>Racism is ONLY...</b>	<b>“Racial Justice Perspective”</b> (acknowledges and challenges racism) <b>Racism is OFTEN...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual and interpersonal bias</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional inequality</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intentional acts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of actions and policies, regardless of intent</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolated incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infused in all facets of society</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate and obvious</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invisible and insidious</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the present (the legacy of racism is actually permanent since history cannot be erased—but the way racism is manifested continually changes, and largely depends on the level of public awareness and action to reduce its adverse impacts).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interracial (<u>across</u> racial groups)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intraracial (<u>within</u> racial groups, where people have different amounts of institutional power, all within an overall system of white domination).</li> </ul>

## **Equitable and Inequitable Public Policies**

### **What is Public Policy?**

- Policies are written and approved – laws, regulations, ordinances— “the rules of the game.”
- A policy proposal is basically an idea – a proposed solution or alternative.

### **Examples of Equitable Policies and Proposals**

- *The Civil Rights Act* barred discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations.
- *The Voting Rights Act* prohibited racial barriers to voting and electoral participation.

### **Example of Inequitable Policy-Making and Unintended Impacts**

- *California Class Size Reduction Act*: A well-intended school class-size reduction law in California, designed to improve educational quality, backfired and made schools more unequal. The new law provided state money to any school that was ready and willing to reduce its classes in the primary grades. But in order to reduce class sizes, you need more classroom space, and more teachers. The schools with extra space were typically wealthy and white suburban schools, while poorer urban schools were often very over-crowded (some using basements and janitor’s closets for classes.) The suburban schools immediately applied for the new state money, enabling them to hire new teachers. Guess who they hired? The qualified teachers from the inner-city schools were first in line for the higher paying jobs in smaller classes at wealthier suburban schools. That left the urban schools – which predominantly serve low-income students of color—with a huge teacher shortage. So these schools had to hire a lot of “emergency credentialed teachers” – who lacked teacher training or experience. (California has about 35,000 emergency permitted teachers – most of whom are teaching African American and Latino students in Los Angeles). The net effect was that the quality of education improved in suburban schools (which now had more teachers and smaller classes), while things got worse in the urban schools (which compounded the severe overcrowding problems with a glut of under-qualified teachers).

### **Considering Racial Impact**

- Giving explicit consideration to racial equity and impacts, advocates and legislators could have designed a better way to implement it. They could have given the highest need schools the first priority for the new money. Or they could have phased things so that schools could develop the necessary space for more classrooms and teachers. Instead, racial equity was ignored, and things became more racially unequal.

Social justice organizations, as well as legislatures and other public policymakers, must seriously consider the racial impacts of any policy proposals. The Applied Research Center proposes that public bodies be required to conduct a “Racial Impact Assessment” before passing major legislation, just as companies are required to compile an Environmental Impact Statement before building new developments.

## **Issue Frames**

---

**Version 1: “Rats Bite Infant”** An infant left sleeping in his crib was bitten repeatedly by rats while his 16-year-old mother went to cash her welfare check. A neighbor responded to the cries of the infant and brought the child to Central Hospital where he was treated and released in his mother’s custody. The mother, Angie Burns of the South End, explained softly, “I was only gone five minutes. I left the door open so my neighbor would hear him if he woke up. I never thought this would happen in the daylight.”

---

**Version 2: “Rat Bites Infant: Landlord, Tenants Dispute Blame”**

An eight-month old South End boy was treated and released from Central Hospital yesterday after being bitten by rats while he was sleeping in his crib. Tenants said that repeated requests for extermination had been ignored by the landlord, Henry Brown. Brown claimed that the problem lay with tenants’ improper disposal of garbage. “I spend half my time cleaning up after them. They throw garbage out the window into the back alley and their kids steal the garbage can covers for sliding in the snow.”

---

**Version 3: “Rat Bites Rising in City’s ‘Zone of Death’”**

Rats bit eight-month-old Michael Burns five times yesterday as he napped in his crib. Burns is the latest victim of a rat epidemic plaguing inner-city neighborhoods labeled the “Zone of Death.” Health officials say infant mortality rates in these neighborhoods approach those of many third world countries. A Public Health Department spokesperson explained that federal and state cutbacks forced short staffing at rat control and housing inspection programs. The result, noted Joaquin Nunez, M.D., a pediatrician at Central Hospital, is a five-fold increase in rat bites. He added, “The irony is that Michael lives within walking distance of some of the world’s best medical centers.”

---

**Version 4: “Rat Bites Reveal ‘Racial Redlining’ in City’s Public Health Services**

When rats repeatedly bit eight-month old Michael Burns while he was napping yesterday, the incident shed new light on the city’s failure to protect the public health in neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of people of color. Pauline Johnson, Chairperson of Active Residents in the South End (ARISE), a community group which has complained for months about the rat epidemic plaguing inner-city neighborhoods, charged the city with “racial redlining” in its delivery of public health services. She pointed to drastic cuts in rat control and housing inspections in the South End, compared to other parts of the city, leading to a five-fold increase in rat bites in the South End. A Public Health Department spokesperson acknowledged that federal and state cutbacks have left the agency short-staffed, but refuted the charge that services were being delivered unequally.

*(From Prime Time Activism, by Charlotte Ryan; Version 4 by Applied Research Center.)*

## **Setting the Story Line**

### ***What is the Issue?***

Version 1: Can our society continue to tolerate more babies having babies supported by our welfare system?

Version 2: Have the parties involved adopted the appropriate measures to eliminate the garbage on which rats feed?

Version 3: How can the city maintain basic public health standards given state and federal cutbacks?

Version 4: is the city engaging in “racial redlining” in the delivery of its health services as it faces increasing state and federal cutbacks?

### ***Who is Responsible?***

Version 1: Angie Burns is a symbol of teen mothers on welfare, and, more generally, of the liberal welfare state.

Version 2: Landlord Henry Brown and/or the tenants.

Version 3: Indirectly, state and federal government cutbacks; directly, the municipal public health department and health facilities. The private medical centers’ indifference is also criticized by implication.

Version 4: Most directly, the Public Health Department for documented racial bias in its delivery of public health services (rat and housing inspections); as well as the state and federal government for jeopardizing public health due to budget cutbacks.

### ***What is the Solution?***

Version 1: Individual parent watchfulness, overhaul of the welfare system.

Version 2: Housing court.

Version 3: Restoration of public health and housing inspection programs with public and/or private funding.

Version 4: Adequate funding and equitable service delivery are needed to protect the public health.

*(From **Prime Time Activism**, a book by Charlotte Ryan, with the addition of Version 4 by the Applied Research Center)*