



Diversity Roundtable of Greater Rochester
powered by the Urban League of Rochester

THE CONTEXT

With roots in the US Civil Rights Movement, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) began as a scholarly term applied to the deliberate efforts to redress the multifaceted social, cultural, economic, and political impacts on historically marginalized or minoritized individuals and groups in the United States. More specifically, the initial efforts were an attempt to reverse the detrimental effects that emanated from centuries of anti-black racism through enslavement, Jim Crow, and marginalization via *de facto* and *de jure* forms of segregation. Over the decades, as demographics shifted, DEI broadened to include: gender, religion, sexual orientation, ability, language, citizenship, and other identities.

Even with a universally humanistic grounding for DEI work, momentum for the broad uptake of the practices and pursuits of DEI was slow to come. However, civil unrest and global protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, ushered in a wave of action to embed DEI efforts in myriad for-profit, non-profit, governmental, and social sectors. This resulted in the expansion of Diversity Officer positions, DEI departments, corporate pledges for racial equity, and uptake for anti-racist policies across the country.

These actions, while sometimes superficial, were welcomed and encouraged. Yet, the 2023 US Supreme Court's decision to strike down affirmative action in college admissions has the potential to dismantle DEI efforts and undo the advancements that have been made. Mounting political backlash to DEI work continues to grow as employers across the nation face scrutiny and legal challenges to their DEI programs. Entrenched political polarization, and both implicit and explicit practices including, discrimination, microaggressions, wage gaps, underrepresentation, and a lack of cultural humility, continue to undermine the work of DEI practitioners and contribute to widespread inequities for racialized, oppressed, and systematically marginalized communities.

THE CHARGE

In response, the call is for DEI practitioners to join a coordinated effort to ensure the work of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice remains constant throughout communities, workplaces, educational, and governmental institutions. DEI practitioners must strategically collaborate to tackle systems, behaviors, and actions that threaten the important work meant to restoratively engage in the uplift of individuals and communities underrepresented, as a result of racism, exclusionary economic practices, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, neuro-normativity, and other pervasive forms of marginalization. Furthermore, DEI practitioners must be unwaveringly vigilant in facing the reality that disproportionately negative impacts to individuals in their intersectional identities are compounded when race is a factor. Within the dimensions of identity (age, gender, sexuality, religion, education, ability, citizenship, and geography) there are further inequities based on race.

THE WHO

This group is open to all practitioners of DEI who are responsible for implementing DEI and racial justice efforts in their organization, to include: Chief Diversity Officers, Equity Officers, DEI Managers, DEI Consultants, Superintendents of DEI, and others with DEI in their title and job responsibilities.



THE ACTIONS

To mitigate these issues, we must work to strengthen allyship across diverse populations. We must strategically engage with leadership to influence policies, practices, and organizational culture to support and safeguard DEI efforts.

The Diversity Roundtable of Greater Rochester will serve as a convening body that mobilizes community partners and resources to champion the following:

- cultivate shared understandings of the issues and create a common narrative to be unified in upholding DEI across our community;
- work collaboratively to strengthen the impact of DEI efforts across the community;
- educate community, governmental, and industry leaders about the value and need for DEI in all aspects of society;
- lift up, and support the building of widespread capacity in DEI best practices,
- respond to issues that intentionally or unintentionally threaten DEI practices;
- initiate and sustain effective, bold, and inclusive conversations with community, governmental, and industry leaders;
- support capacity-building for practitioners and extend professional aid in response to hostilities and actions against DEI work;
- sustain a collaborative space to share ideas, discuss challenging issues, and brainstorm solutions to common DEI problems;
- host thought-leader forums and facilitate regular stakeholder engagements to ensure DEI efforts remain at the forefront of community wellbeing efforts.

THE SOURCES

1. Boston University: [Few DEI Programs Track Impact](#)
2. Common Ground Health's African American Health Coalition: [Color of Health](#)
3. Commission on Racial and Structural Equity: [2021 RASE Commission Report](#)
4. Crush, Peter: [The-great-dei-resignation-why-are-so-many-diversity-heads-calling-it-quits](#)
5. Harper, Shaun: [Why A 'Lay Low' DEI Strategy Is Especially Bad Right Now \(forbes.com\)](#)
6. Harvard Law School: [DEI Initiatives under Attack by Activists \(harvard.edu\)](#)
7. Kendi, Ibram X.: [Anti-DEI Movement](#)
8. Morris, Carmen: [Anti-racism-why-your-dei-agenda-will-never-be-a-success-without-it](#)
9. National Urban League: [Morial Announces "D3", a new Phase of Advocacy and Activism](#)
10. Sherman, Lee: [Were Chief Diversity Officers Set Up to Fail? | Visier](#)