

Putting Racism on the Table

Discussion Guide

We encourage you to watch the videos in the *Putting Racism on the Table* series with your colleagues and to then use these discussion questions to facilitate conversation and action. For more information and links to the videos, visit www.washingtongrantmakers.org.



Session Four

Topic: Mass Incarceration

Speaker: James Bell

Founder and Executive Director
The W. Haywood Burns Institute

- James Bell offers a number of historical examples of the incarceration of youth of color. What did it feel like to be reminded of the historical foundation that informs current justice practices?
- How do structural racism, implicit bias, and white privilege impact how justice is dispensed in the U.S. from kindergarten to adulthood?
- James Bell indicated that, as a society, the U.S. has to make a choice between “two visions of justice: one that is custody, control, and suppression; and the other that is intervention, services, and an asset-based approach to behavior change.” What might it take for the second vision to be embraced in the U.S.?
- James Bell suggests that the foundation for mass incarceration is a desire for safety. Given the importance of a sense of safety to everyone, what other ways might there be for a community to achieve a sense of safety?
- James Bell stated that the justice system is not a system, but a decentralized grouping of autonomous agencies working together at the county level with no accountability to each other. What are potential interventions for transforming this way of dispensing justice?

While this discussion guide was developed for the philanthropic community, please adapt it for use with your community/sector.