

EQUALITY VS. EQUITY

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES



DON'T THE TERMS "EQUALITY" AND "EQUITY" MEAN THE SAME THING? IT WOULD SEEM SO.

» Both terms point toward treating all people the same with dignity and worth, as children of God who have voice, power, and choice.

» Both terms point toward the deep desire that every person should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, not only to survive but thrive.

» Both terms point toward the day when differences like race, age, socio-economic status, mobility, gender, or sexual orientation will not determine access to resources, mediate success, or designate one's level of inclusion and well-being.



HOWEVER, EQUALITY AND EQUITY ARE NOT THE SAME.

EQUALITY SAYS...

1 » Everyone should begin from the same starting line, with equal access to resources, and an equal chance to survive and thrive.

2 » The "rules" of the game are the same for everyone, and are applied consistently.

3 » Oppressions (racism, classism, ageism, etc.) will end when all people are treated with dignity and respect.

4 » Everyone has the right to vote.

5 » We can eradicate racism by "doing no harm"; i.e. racism will end when we stop harming Persons and Communities of Color.

EQUITY SAYS...

1 » Everyone does not begin from the same starting place. There are historic, systemic, and on-going inequities in our political, economic, educational, health, religious, and other systems, where discrimination "lives" within the structures themselves.

2 » Even if the rules of the game are the same, the game itself to privilege some at the expense of others.

3 » Oppressions (racism, classism, ageism, etc.) will end when we address and dismantle the assumptions, values, and systems of oppression which actively resist treating all persons with dignity and respect.

4 » Everyone's right to vote is protected and their access to voting is promoted. For example, no one has to travel an unreasonable distance to reach a voting station, workers are given paid time-off in order to vote, everyone has a ballot in their language, etc.

5 » We can eradicate racism by both "doing no harm" and by "doing good"; i.e. racism will end when we actively work to stop the actions that lead to racial injustice and when we engage in the work of dismantling its root causes.

Just like we would never simply bind our child's wound and send them back to school without holding the bully accountable, we cannot assume that addressing the expressions of oppression (equality) can change the root of the problem (equity). As Christians, we believe that the Kingdom of God, the Beloved Community in its fullest, will allow every single one of us to live with the dignity and worth true equality would afford, that which God intends and we desperately long for.

UNTIL THEN, WE DO THE WORK OF EQUITY THAT IT MAY ONE DAY BE SO.

PREPARED BY: GENERAL COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE | WWW.GCORR.ORG