



DREXEL UNIVERSITY

Ubuntu Center

on Racism, Global Movements
& Population Health Equity

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The Ubuntu Center Launches Groundbreaking Project to Address Structural Racism in Healthcare with \$6 Million Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant

Philadelphia, PA - March 1, 2024 - The [Ubuntu Center](#) on Racism, Global Movements, and Population Health Equity at the Dornsife School of Public Health (DSPH) at Drexel University has been selected to lead a groundbreaking \$6 million project funded by the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation \(RWJF\)](#). This significant grant puts the needs, ideas, and voices of the community at the forefront to address deep-rooted structural racism within the healthcare industry and advance equity and justice in healthcare systems.

"This funding represents a pivotal moment in our collective efforts to dismantle structural racism within healthcare and advance population health equity," said Sharrelle Barber, ScD, MPH, an assistant professor at the DSPH and director of The Ubuntu Center. "This project allows us to engage in a community-centered process in regions across the country that honors the expertise and lived experiences of those most impacted by structural racism with hopes of creating a more equitable and just healthcare system for everyone."

The grant comes at a crucial time, as efforts and existing systems designed to address racial health inequities have often fallen short. Structural racism continues to pose a critical threat to population health equity and little attention has been given to the role of racialized capitalism in perpetuating structural racism within the healthcare industry. Additionally, there has been a historical lack of accountability to Black communities and communities of color who have experienced the greatest harm.

The Center's approach to this project is unique, underscored by a thorough planning process that involved cross-disciplinary collaboration, an essential tool for enhancing any team's capacity to achieve its intended impact. Recognizing the challenges inherent in such endeavors, the Center employed a range of tools and strategies to navigate the evolution of the planning team through stages of formation, clarification, and agreement.

In the early phase of planning, the Ubuntu Center team convened a diverse cohort of national and local leaders in community organizing, health equity research, systems science, community health, healthcare, and public health to identify targeted outcomes and foster a cohesive vision for the grant project.

“Our thorough planning phase, a rare opportunity not commonly available to project teams, has been instrumental in fortifying relationships and identifying areas needing additional support. This mindful planning is essential for bridging gaps in insights and practical implementation,” said Hasshan Batts, DHSc, MSW, executive director at Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley (PNLV) and a member of the project team.

"Addressing structural racism requires understanding and challenging the unequal distribution of power within the healthcare industry," said Sirry Alang, PhD, associate dean for equity and justice at the University of Pittsburgh School of Education and co-principal investigator of the study. "This project seeks to uncover the mechanisms that perpetuate inequities and identify opportunities for meaningful change."

Rooted in a commitment to building collective power and mutual learning with Black communities, the Ubuntu Centers' transdisciplinary team will engage in a community-centered process across three to five regional sites. By cultivating a diverse network of stakeholders, developing a framework to understand structural racism in healthcare, translating project learnings through a collaborative narrative strategy, and co-developing organizing tools for policy transformation, the project seeks to lay a foundation for transformative change within healthcare and beyond.

"This project goes beyond documenting inequities," Jennifer Ware, MPH, deputy director of the Ubuntu Center added, highlighting the project's innovative approach, "it seeks to develop actionable strategies for dismantling structural racism within the healthcare industry to catalyze radical healing and transformation."

To learn more about the Ubuntu Center, visit ubuntucenter.org.

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About The Ubuntu Center

The Ubuntu Center unites diverse partners to generate and translate evidence, accelerate antiracism solutions, and transform the health of communities locally, nationally, and globally. The Center aims to provide the platform and organizational infrastructure to advance collective anti-racism scholarship, training, and action.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to improving health and health equity in the United States. In partnership with others, we are working to develop a Culture of Health rooted in equity that provides every individual with a fair and just opportunity to thrive, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org. Follow the Foundation on Twitter at www.rwjf.org/twitter or on Facebook at www.rwjf.org/facebook.