

A Reparative Justice Framework for Advancing Faculty Equity
& NEBHE'S North Star Collective

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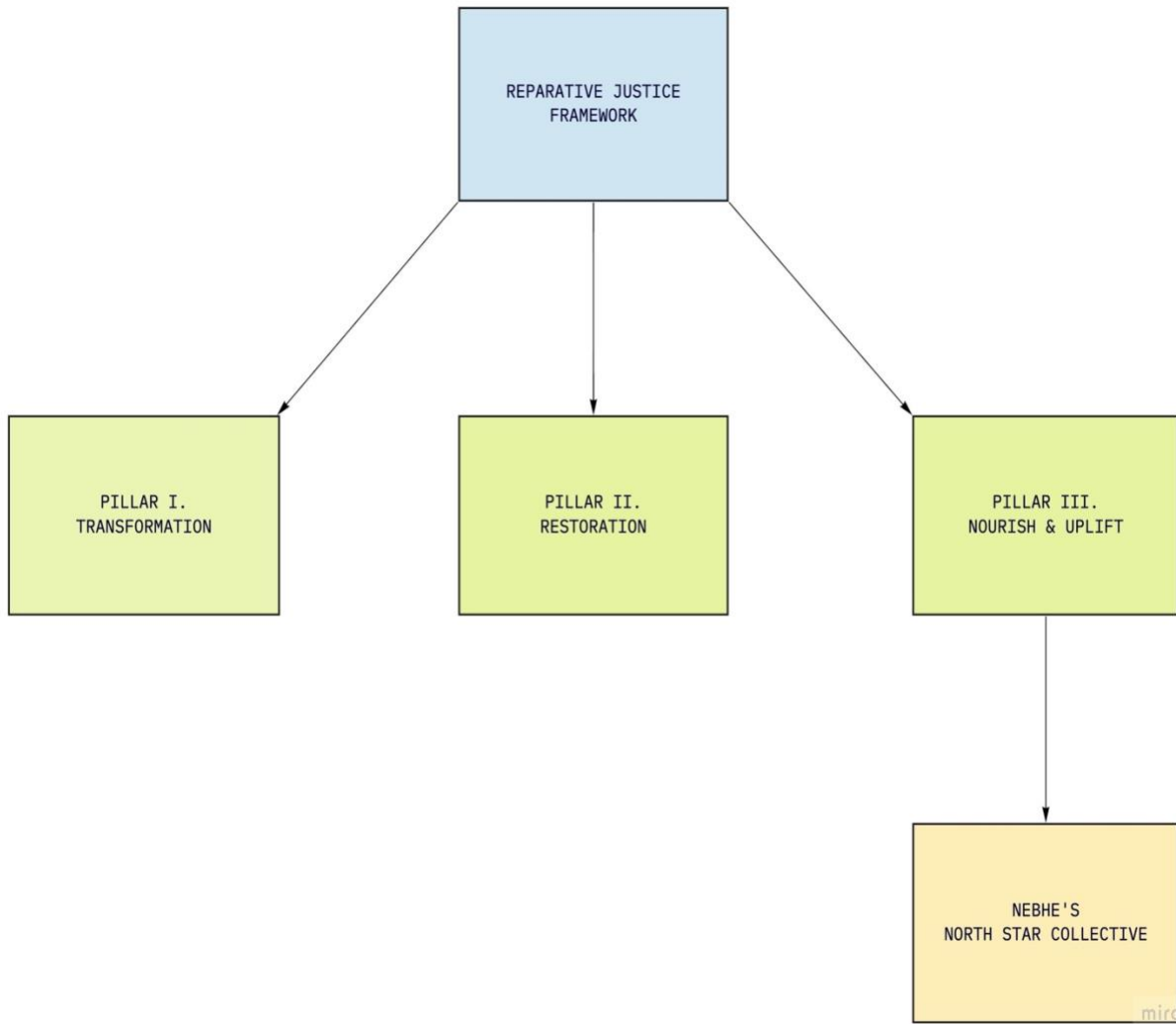
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I. ABSTRACT

This document seeks to outline a reparative justice framework for advancing faculty equity as well as propose ways in which NEBHE can expand and elevate this work to create a shared, regional vision and provide resources that will aid New England higher education institutions in these efforts. It also asserts that NEBHE can lead the charge in reparative justice work by establishing the North Star Collective, a fellowship program that would provide a nourishing community of care, mentorship, and professional development for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) early career faculty in the region.

It begins by briefly summarizing the legacy of slavery as well as existing patterns of structural racism and inequalities in higher education institutions. It then moves to describe the specific challenges faced by BIPOC faculty and how a DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) model falls short in addressing issues of equity. Lastly, it identifies the Three Pillars of reparative justice, offers concrete steps institutions can take towards faculty equity (including specific examples of how this work is already being done), and outlines the proposed NEBHE North Star Collective program. The final sections provide a prospective timetable for this initiative and resources for those interested in learning more about reparative justice.

II. REPARATIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK FLOWCHART



III. THE CASE FOR REPARATIVE JUSTICE FOR ADVANCING FACULTY EQUITY

The Legacy of Slavery in the Academy

New England institutions of higher education are deeply embedded in structures of racial hierarchy. Recent studies have shown the historical centrality of slavery and settler-colonialism in the founding and financing of the region's colleges and universities. They reveal and confirm that the bodies of Black and Indigenous people were the original endowment that made many institutions of higher education possible.¹

While not all institutions are directly entangled with the history of slavery, most places of higher education in New England have benefited from the practice in some way or another. New England ships carried enslaved Africans to the Caribbean and North America. New England mills, built and financed with profits from the slave trade, spun and wove cotton grown and harvested by enslaved people. The northern legacy permeates all aspects of the region's institutions of higher education, including the endowments of longstanding educational institutions, but also embedded in the very brick and stone warehouses converted to waterfront luxury condos and restaurants, or the preserved colonial buildings and structures used for academic buildings. All postsecondary institutions in New England - large and small, public and private, well-endowed and modestly funded - have benefitted from the enslavement and colonization of Black and Indigenous people.

Beyond Slavery: Structural Racism & Institutional Inequalities in the Academy

Beyond slavery, institutions of higher education played a historical role in and continue to perpetuate racial inequality, and are implicated in the material and conceptual subjugation of Black and Indigenous peoples, as well as other people of color. Throughout New England, institutions of higher education reified and reinforced white supremacy by underwriting, funding, and propagating ideologies and pseudoscience that justified slavery and broader racial inequalities. Postsecondary institutions house and support the disciplines that presented Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) as inferior and valueless. The scholarship and pedagogies of institutions of higher education - in religious studies, anthropology, biology, and history, to name a few - dehumanized BIPOC people, and were used to legitimize violence against them.

Institutions of higher education continue to uphold white supremacy by fostering disciplines and areas of studies that explicitly exclude the voices, knowledges, and experiences of BIPOC people, sanitizing and "whitewashing" the history of disciplines, and diminishing studies of non-white people. Furthermore, postsecondary institutions are accountable for the continued occupation of Indigenous lands, supporting residential agreements, gentrification ("neighborhood revitalization") of Black neighborhoods and other marginalized groups, racially discriminatory hiring and tenure/promotion policies, and instituting policing practices that profile BIPOC residents and students. Since institutions of higher education can dictate working-class wages, land values, health care standards, and policing practices of their municipalities, they are vital sites of struggle over larger concerns of racial justice that extend beyond slavery.²

Racial Inequalities Among Faculty

BIPOC faculty working within the academy exist within structures that marginalize them. Across all faculty in the United States, only 5.5% are Black, 5% Hispanic, and 0.4% American Indian or Alaskan Native.³ Black faculty are hired, tenured, and promoted at a lower rate than their white counterparts. BIPOC faculty are overrepresented among non-tenure track and adjunct faculty, which demonstrates their continued precarity. There is a wealth of scholarship on the experiences of BIPOC faculty in tenure-track positions that documents how they are overworked (particularly in “diversity” work or the labor of advising and mentoring BIPOC students) and unsupported. They often also find their scholarship systematically denied, hidden, and obscured. The exclusion and erasure of BIPOC faculty in higher education is indicative of the historical and ongoing denial and erasure of BIPOC people in the nation more broadly as producers and purveyors of knowledge.⁴

How the DEI Framework Falls Short

In response to the historical and continued role that institutions of higher education play in sustaining and perpetuating racial hierarchies among faculty, many institutions have begun to take up diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts, including the hiring of chief diversity officers and other DEI administrators, and training for faculty and staff. In theory, DEI initiatives targeted toward faculty are intended to develop programs to diversify the faculty body, pursue inclusion of underrepresented faculty voices across the institution, and promote justice in engagements with BIPOC faculty at the institution.

Unfortunately, DEI in practice has fallen short of its purported intent in several ways:

- Postsecondary institutions often take up DEI as reactions to events or moments on campus or more broadly in society. The emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013 and other related racial justice protests on campuses across the U.S. in the last decade, for example, prompted many institutions to hire chief diversity officers, to require implicit bias training and other programs to develop their capacity to engage with difference, and increase the number of non-white faculty at the institution. In addition, for many institutions, significant resources were only put toward DEI work when they received reports of the change in demographics of college-aged students (from predominantly white to BIPOC).
- As DEI initiatives tend to be reactionary, it also means that they lack lasting institutional vision. They tend to be programmatic, focusing on the immediate rather than the long-term. For this reason, DEI programs are not sustained after the catalysts - student protests and demands - have waned.
- In contemporary manifestations, the “diversity” aspects of DEI (that is, increasing numbers in the room) grossly overshadows the “equity” and “inclusion” pieces. Institutions disproportionately focus on access (hiring more BIPOC faculty or recruiting more BIPOC students), but pay far less attention to exposing and dismantling white supremacy. In this way, they tend to be divorced from addressing systemic institutional issues that drive racial disparities, and have become ineffective in creating, developing, and fostering campus cultures that affirm and value BIPOC faculty (as well as their BIPOC student counterparts).
- Current approaches to DEI generally foreground helping white faculty to engage with people of different races while neglecting the actual needs of BIPOC faculty. By re-centering white people, DEI thus recreates and perpetuates the invisibility of BIPOC faculty. DEI initiatives emphasize training and individual behavioral change, at the expense of institutionalized changes to their culture and operations.
- DEI initiatives have been commodified, used to promote the interest of the university rather than the interests of faculty of color.

Ultimately, the DEI framework often fails at achieving equity and is ineffective in addressing the structures in higher education that adversely harm BIPOC faculty. It does not promote the work necessary to transform institutions into spaces that can serve, nurture, and uplift them. New England institutions need a broader, more comprehensive transformation so that they can lead the charge in pursuing racial justice and model practices and cultures that promote equitable environments for working, teaching, and learning. DEI has been unsuccessful in attaining these goals. While DEI is transitional - useful for bringing awareness, starting conversations, and providing some small-scale, short-term programs to “stop the bleeding” - it is only through *repair* that real racial justice can be realized.

Reparative Justice: The Next Step Toward Faculty Equity

NEBHE would like to work with institutions in the region to develop a reparative justice framework for their work in faculty equity. Reparations refers to the act or process of making amends for wrongs through the restoration and rehabilitation of those who have been harmed, restitution for the harm, and cessation of harmful practices. Reparative justice is popularly interpreted as calling for states, governments, and institutions to provide financial compensation to the people who have been wronged (such as reparations paid to survivors of the Holocaust, Japanese Americans for their unlawful internment, and survivors and families impacted by the Tuskegee experiments on Black men.)⁵

However, what NEBHE is proposing is a much deeper, more nuanced understanding of reparative justice. We conceptualize reparative justice as practices that redress systemic harms against BIPOC people and support their healing. It is a new way of thinking about justice that centers and restores those who have been harmed. It is not about “settling a score” or resolving a debt; it is not a one-time check or public policy. **As a framework for faculty equity, reparative justice signifies a fundamental change to institutional practices that seek to repair damages done in the past to BIPOC faculty, as well as stop present harm and prevent the reproduction of harm.**

IV. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION (DEI) VS REPARATIVE JUSTICE MODELS

| DEI | Reparative Justice |
|---|--|
| Reactionary, responds to current climate | Ongoing, not responsive to moments; driven by the understanding that the past, present, and future exist together as they relate to racial oppression |
| Focuses on individuals and making changes at the individual level; often focuses on the short-term | Emphasizes transforming systems and institutions that harm BIPOC faculty; focuses on long-term systemic solutions, and thoroughly tending to the root causes of the problems |
| Re-centers whiteness and what white people need to engage with BIPOC people; BIPOC faculty are rarely consulted | Centers the needs of BIPOC faculty in academia and what is necessary for their well-being; a grounded approach that listens to BIPOC and includes them in the process |
| Foregrounds diversity over equity | Takes a holistic approach that encompasses promoting access, support, and uplift for BIPOC faculty; a framework, a lens that is taken to every facet of faculty life |
| Structured around programs that can easily be named and measured | Institutionalized approach to racial justice that is embedded in the institution's vision and practices; outlives the individuals who designed the vision |

V. WORKING TOWARDS REPARATIVE JUSTICE IN NEW ENGLAND

Reparative justice work is already being done by individual programs and institutions in the New England region, though often in silos and without an institutional vision. NEBHE's goal is to expand and elevate this work to create a shared, regional vision and provide resources that will give direction to and aid institutions wanting to embark on faculty equity or already engaged in this work. Ultimately, **we want to create a long-standing consortium of postsecondary institutions** that will pool resources, share best practices and expertise, and provide support and accountability to ensure that reparative justice in its various forms is achieved in higher education in New England - and beyond. We organize reparative justice around the following Three Pillars. Each pillar requires its own work and institutions should endeavor to address them all simultaneously. On its own, an individual pillar will not accomplish equity.

Pillar I. Transformation

*"'Diversity' work has come to mean that 'we have this existing institution and we're just going to diversify the demographic that exists therein and not have any alteration of the infrastructure of the institution itself'" (Davarian Baldwin, professor and author of In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities). Institutions need to work to transform how they operate. They need to work towards becoming an institution that pairs concern for institutional health with an understanding that white supremacist structures must be dismantled. **Transformation involves leveraging power, influence, and resources to ensure cessation and non-repetition of harmful practices that uphold white supremacy.***

Pillar II. Restoration

*"Black scholars and many others are disrespected, devalued, or dismissed . . . [Institutions are preoccupied] with brand [which] produces superficial talk about diversity without a genuine commitment to respecting the contributions of Black scholars and others" (Cornel West, professor, Harvard). In other words, there has been a constant, sustained assault on the intellectual capacity of BIPOC faculty. **Restoration therefore involves taking steps to repair the cultural and epistemic damages done to BIPOC faculty in the institution.***

Pillar III. Nourish and Uplift

*"Institutions woefully neglect the emotional, psychological, and physical toll on BIPOC faculty of being on a campus and living in the surrounding environs where they are challenged, disrespected, disregarded, and without support systems" (based on comments by Richard Reddick, associate dean for equity, community engagement and outreach in the University of Texas at Austin's College of Education). **Institutions need tailored, targeted investments in services and programs that specifically support BIPOC faculty, nourishing them holistically and creating spaces for their healing, imagination, and innovation.***

The table below highlights different ways to work toward and achieve the Three Pillars of reparative justice and provides examples from various institutions that are already engaged in this work. The variety of the activities and the institutions highlighted indicates that reparative justice can be pursued in a number of ways (that suit the specific context of each institution), and can be pursued in different types of organizations - public and private, resource-constrained and resource rich environments.

| PILLARS | POSSIBLE WORK | EXAMPLES |
|---|---|---|
| <p>I. Transformation: Leveraging power, influence, and resources to ensure cessation and non-repetition of harmful practices that uphold white supremacy</p> | <p>Rework advancement/tenure and promotion procedures</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform tenure and promotion standards to ensure a more holistic assessment of candidates, to consider the variety of factors that impact and impede BIPOC faculty in regard to publishing, teaching, and serving at the institution (CASE STUDY: Connecticut College) |
| | <p>Cluster hiring</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire multiple BIPOC focused on racism and social justice to help recruit and retain BIPOC faculty (CASE STUDIES: UMASS Amherst; RISD; Northeastern; Providence College) |
| | <p>Pursue pay equity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ban the use of salary history as a component of the interview process and for pay-setting • Provide a clear, transparent process for faculty to file claims and pursue equity-based raises |
| | <p>Create faculty and staff anti-racist professional development</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onboarding programs for all new faculty and staff that include the colonial history of your institution and anti-racism professional development (CASE STUDY: University of Maryland) |
| | <p>Challenge the colonial legacies of institutions in the region</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truth-telling series where scholars and community members share the colonial history of the institution and its environments (CASE STUDY: RWU) • Writing land acknowledgement statements and encouraging faculty and staff to include in syllabi and official memos |
| <p>II. Restoration: Repairing cultural and epistemic damages done to BIPOC in the institution</p> | <p>Make visible the bodies and work of BIPOC on campus</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library displays of the work of BIPOC faculty • Monthly features of the work of BIPOC faculty on websites and publications for the institution • Webinars for BIPOC scholars to share their research with the campus community |
| | <p>Create writing fellowship and grants</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small awards, course releases, or moratoria for BIPOC faculty so that they can focus on research |
| <p>III. Nourish and uplift: Tailored, targeted investments in services and programs that specifically support BIPOC, nourishing them holistically and creating spaces for their healing, imagination, and innovation</p> | <p>Facilitate communities of support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize affinity groups of BIPOC faculty |
| | <p>Support mentoring opportunities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constellation mentoring that allows faculty to develop a network of mentor partnerships that reflect their different needs (CASE STUDY: UMASS Amherst) • Provide modest grants to allow BIPOC faculty to participate in NEBHE’s North Star Collective or help them build their network of mentors off campus in a number of ways (meet with senior scholars, attend workshops, etc.) |

VI. NORTH STAR COLLECTIVE

Rationale for Name

The proposed “North Star Collective” name for this NEBHE regional faculty initiative has several historical and contemporary influences. “North Star” pays homage to the fact that enslaved Africans and African Americans used the North Star in the night sky to guide them to freedom. The name is also a nod to *The North Star*, the antislavery newspaper published by African American abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Given NEBHE’s commitment to reparative justice, we believe it is important that higher education institutions acknowledge the ways in which they have benefitted directly or indirectly from slavery and the long legacy of white supremacy. We also believe that institutions can support the NEBHE NSC program as a way to repair the harm and potentially move forward to become a refuge for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty in the ways that the “North” was once imagined in American history as a promised land. The term “collective” reflects our aim to establish a community of BIPOC faculty that are tied together by shared experiences as minoritized ethnoracial peoples in New England institutions. Historically and contemporarily, “collective” has been used by activist groups to promote the liberation, uplift, health and wellbeing, and overall care of BIPOC people. This collective will be established by and for BIPOC faculty, and will serve to support these goals as well.

Program Description

The NEBHE North Star Collective fellowship program provides a nourishing community of care, mentorship, and professional development for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) early career faculty in New England. The fellowship reflects the organization’s commitment to reparative justice as it seeks to address structural racism and institutional inequalities in the academy, as well as to repair the harm and trauma to BIPOC faculty created by toxic campus cultures. To that end, the fellowship is a space for BIPOC faculty to navigate the challenges they face in their academic careers that can hinder their professional advancement and are often detrimental to their health and wellbeing. The fellowship supports the recruitment, retention, and advancement/tenure/promotion of BIPOC faculty in New England colleges and universities through an annual retreat, a formal mentorship program, monthly workshops, and small research stipends. It also aims to foster a sense of solidarity and community among BIPOC faculty in the region to collectively support their holistic growth.

The program provides a one-year possibly renewable fellowship for twenty BIPOC faculty in New England. The fellowship includes:

- Participation in an annual retreat
- Formal mentorship with a senior faculty mentor in the region
- Monthly virtual workshops to support professional development and holistic growth
- Networking and peer mentorship opportunities to cultivate a scholarly space and community of care among early career BIPOC faculty in the New England region
- A \$1500 stipend to support research and professional development goals

Eligibility

- Self-identifying BIPOC faculty including Black/African/African American, Latinx, Native/Indigenous, Arab/Middle Eastern, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Multiracial
- Junior faculty in their first five years of teaching at a New England institution (those who have been tenured or promoted are not eligible)
- Note: in addition to full-time core/tenure-track faculty, lecturers and adjunct faculty in the region are welcome and encouraged to apply

VII. TIMETABLE

January – April 2021:

- Publicize and promote the reparative justice framework to generate interest/buy in
- Research and network with New England institutions to gather feedback on proposed reparative justice framework and NSC program
- Identify potential advisory board members

May 2021:

- Establish NEBHE North Star Advisory Board
- Develop framework for a consortium of institutions around reparative justice
- Establish budget, identify/allocate funding from NEBHE and determine a model of support from New England institutions
- Call for applications for inaugural cohort of 20 NSC fellows
- Call for senior faculty mentors and targeted invitations

June – July 2021:

- Plan 2021-2022 AY programming including Annual Retreat, monthly workshops, guest speakers, etc.
- Review applications and accept inaugural cohort of 20 NSC fellows
- Identify institutional and state partners for the reparative justice consortium for faculty equity

End of August 2021:

- First NSC retreat held in Boston (or virtually if we cannot afford it or if deemed unsafe because of COVID-19 pandemic)

September 2021 – May 2022:

- Monthly virtual NSC programming

VIII. NOTES

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4. See, for example, *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, eds. Angela P. Harris, Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Yolanda Flores Niemann, Carmen G. Gonzalez (Utah: Utah State University Press, 2012).
5. "Reparations Now Toolkit," Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), accessed February 12, 2021, <https://m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Reparations-Now-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>.
6. Simon Feldman and Afshan Jafar, "Equity Beyond COVID-19: Revising Tenure and Promotion Standards," *Academe*, Winter 2021, <https://www.aaup.org/article/equity-beyond-covid-19#.YCQiH3dKjBI>

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