



On Race and Regionalism

Angela Glover Blackwell: I come to this work out of a racial equity perspective. “Regional equity” is helpful because it allows us to mainstream our discussions and get a new boost. But I don’t think we can achieve racial equity unless we actually focus on *racial equity*. We need to address the unwillingness to deal with race, which continues to place people of color at a disadvantage.

Bruce Katz: We’re really talking about alignment in our work. Take “Fix It First” [a strategy in the Detroit region to invest in existing transportation infrastructure in the city and inner-ring suburbs before building new roads in the suburbs]. We’re making three arguments in favor of the program: efficiency, fiscal responsibility, and equity. All of those come together in a politician’s mind. We’re not promoting just competitiveness, but inclusive growth also.

John Powell: In Cleveland, African-American leadership has pushed back against regionalism, saying it has been driven by the white suburbs. They want a kind of regionalism where the interests of African-Americans are up front, and they are pushing us to better say where regionalism has actually benefited marginalized people, and where it hasn’t.

Carl Anthony: The people in leadership understand the language of competitiveness. They don’t really understand racism and inequality. I don’t think you can really make an argument that we should talk about mixed-income housing, workforce housing, and all these things, as if racism doesn’t exist. I think it is necessary to lift this up, and there is going to be tension there. But I don’t think you can get black people in substantial numbers involved in this kind of discussion unless we deal specifically with race. I think the reality is that we’re going to have to do both. ■

*Excerpted from Edging Toward Equity: Creating Shared Opportunity in America’s Regions, Report from the Conversation on Regional Equity (CORE)
By Manuel Pastor, Chris Benner, and Rachel Rosner, Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community, University of California, Santa Cruz*

■ Photo: Katrina survivor rebuilds her house in New Orleans. © 2005 Scott Braley

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