



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

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