

# "Understanding Equality and Equity"

RECREATION COUNCIL WORKING GROUP

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# In Lak'ech Ala K'in

*In Lak Ech (Mayan Greeting)*

Tú eres mi otro yo / You are my other me.

Si te hago daño a ti / I do harm to you,

Me hago daño a mí mismo / I do harm to myself;

Si te amo y respeto / If I love and respect you,

Me amo y respeto yo / I love and respect myself.

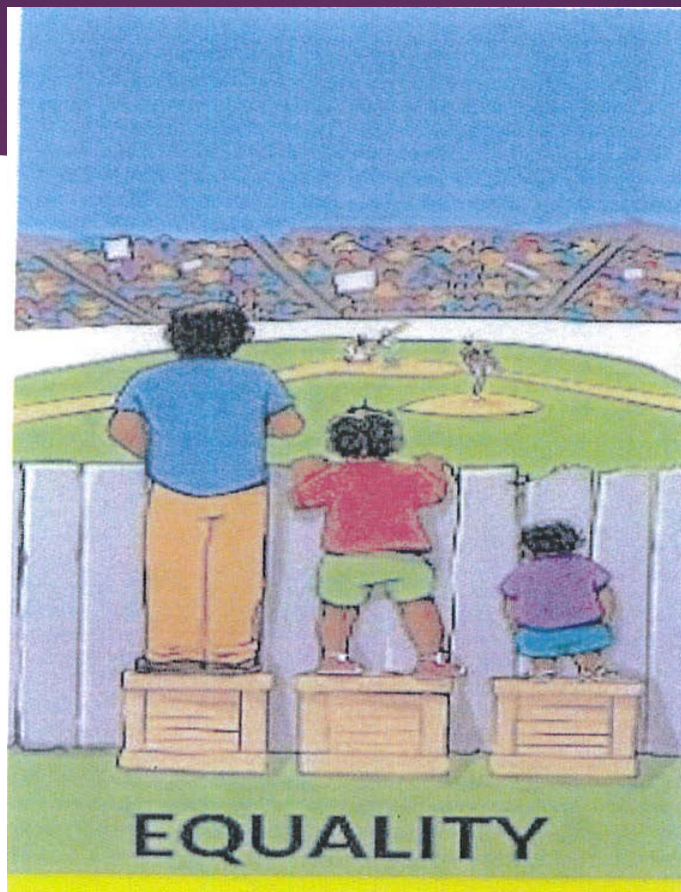
– *From Luis Valdez's "Pensamiento Serpentino"*

# Why Social Equity?

- ▶ Why is Social Equity important?
- ▶ 50 year anniversary of MLK demise, yet just about every single social indicator looks as if there is not much progress.
- ▶ Although equity is obviously an important concept and a democratic concept...
- ▶ ... it is not an easy concept to implement simply by introducing behavioral prescriptions, rules, and/or simply completing a checklist.
- ▶ Instead, it requires a commitment to understanding an entire new worldview that may be at odds with the status quo and then having the courage to make policies that reflect this new perspective.

- ▶ Park&Recreation members as  
“ **Guardians of Enchantment** ”

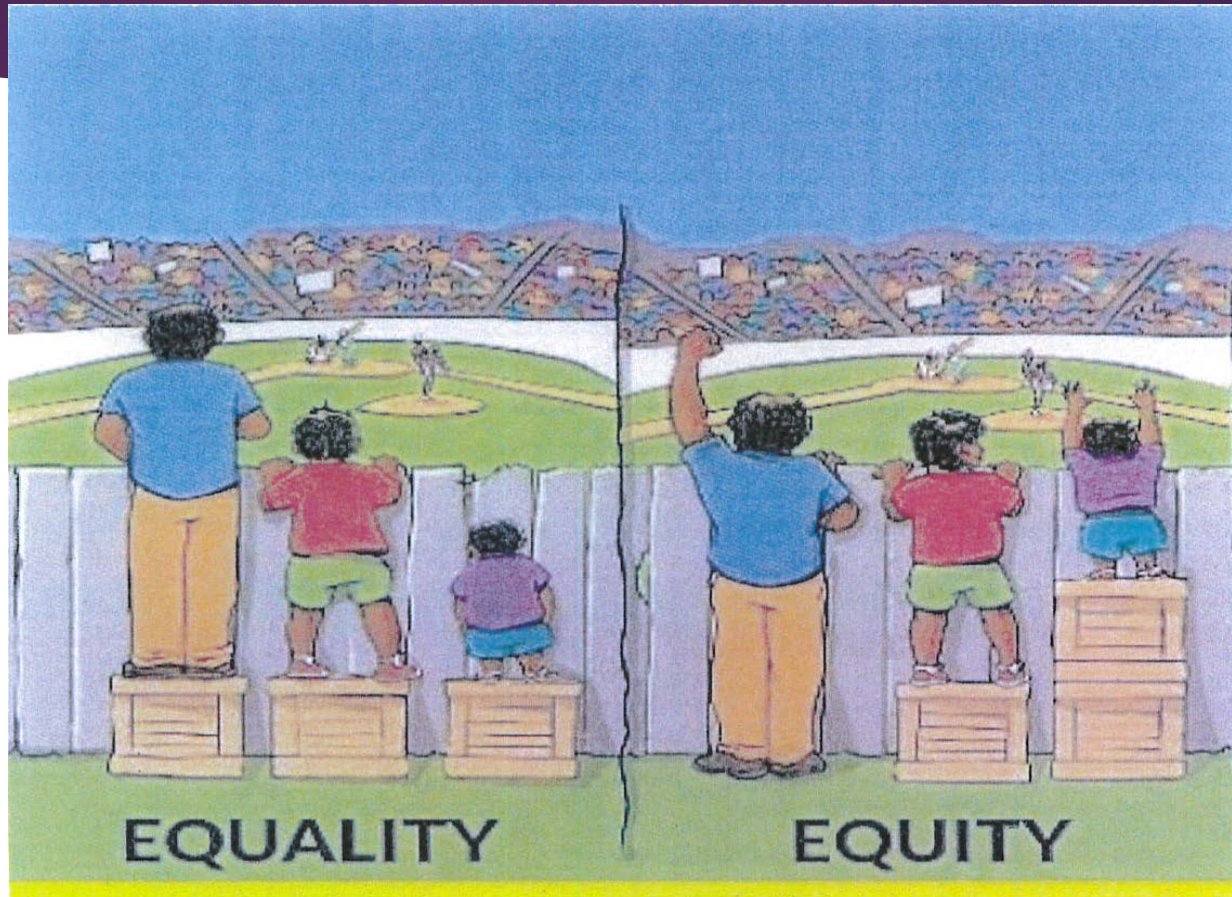
# Equality



The assumption is that everyone benefits from the same support. Equal treatment. Equal opportunity.

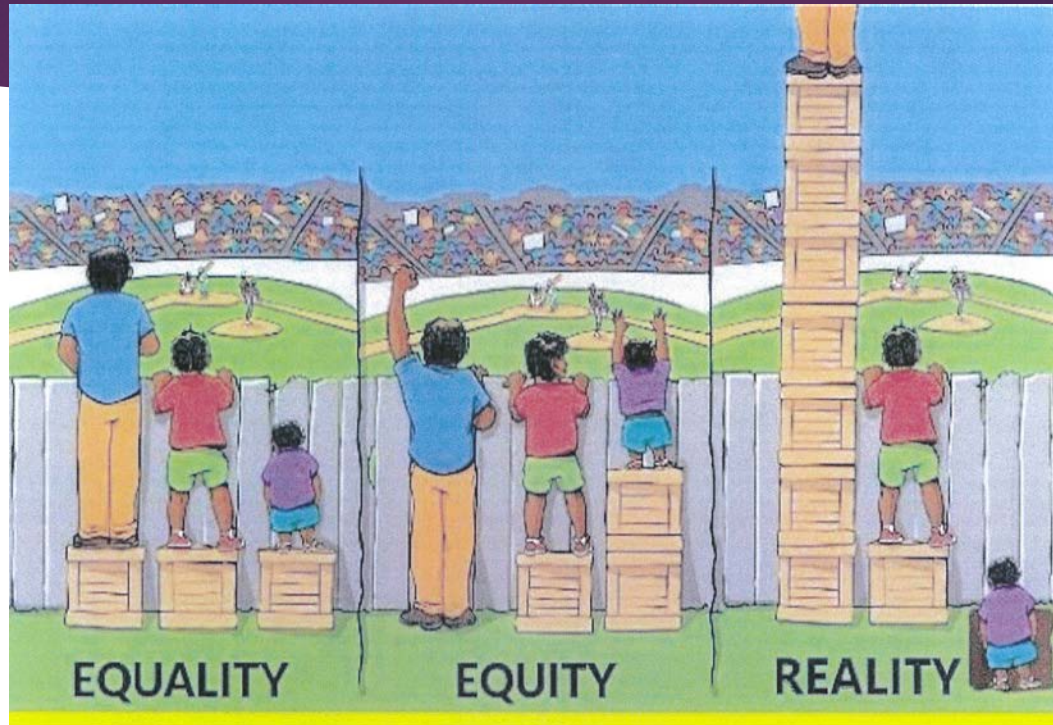


# Equity



Everyone gets the support they need. Outcome based.

# Reality



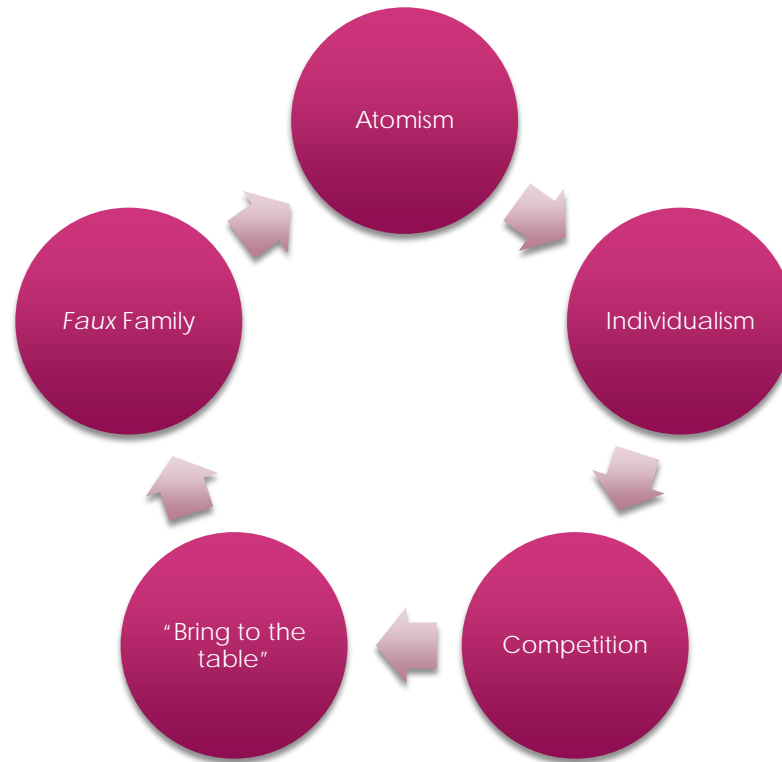
Engaging in equality, often times, exacerbates, rather than ameliorating the existing inequities. Widens the gap. Allows those who can already see with benefits that they may not need, while continuing to block access those who cannot see.

# What is the Source of this inequality/inequity?

- ▶ Innovative Ideas? Maybe.
- ▶ Hard Work? Maybe.
- ▶ Funding? Absolutely, if the distribution follows the model of “equality” rather than “equity.”
- ▶ Other important things that are regularly overlooked? Worldviews, core values, and frame of mind that impact how institutions and structures are organized? What MLK Jr. called “ontological affirmations.”



# Popular Worldviews that Support the Persistence of Inequity



- ▶ Atomism
- ▶ Individualism
- ▶ Competition
- ▶ “Bring to the table”
- ▶ ***Faux*** Family, ***Faux*** Community, ***Faux*** sisterhood/brotherhood

# Humanitarianism: False Generosity

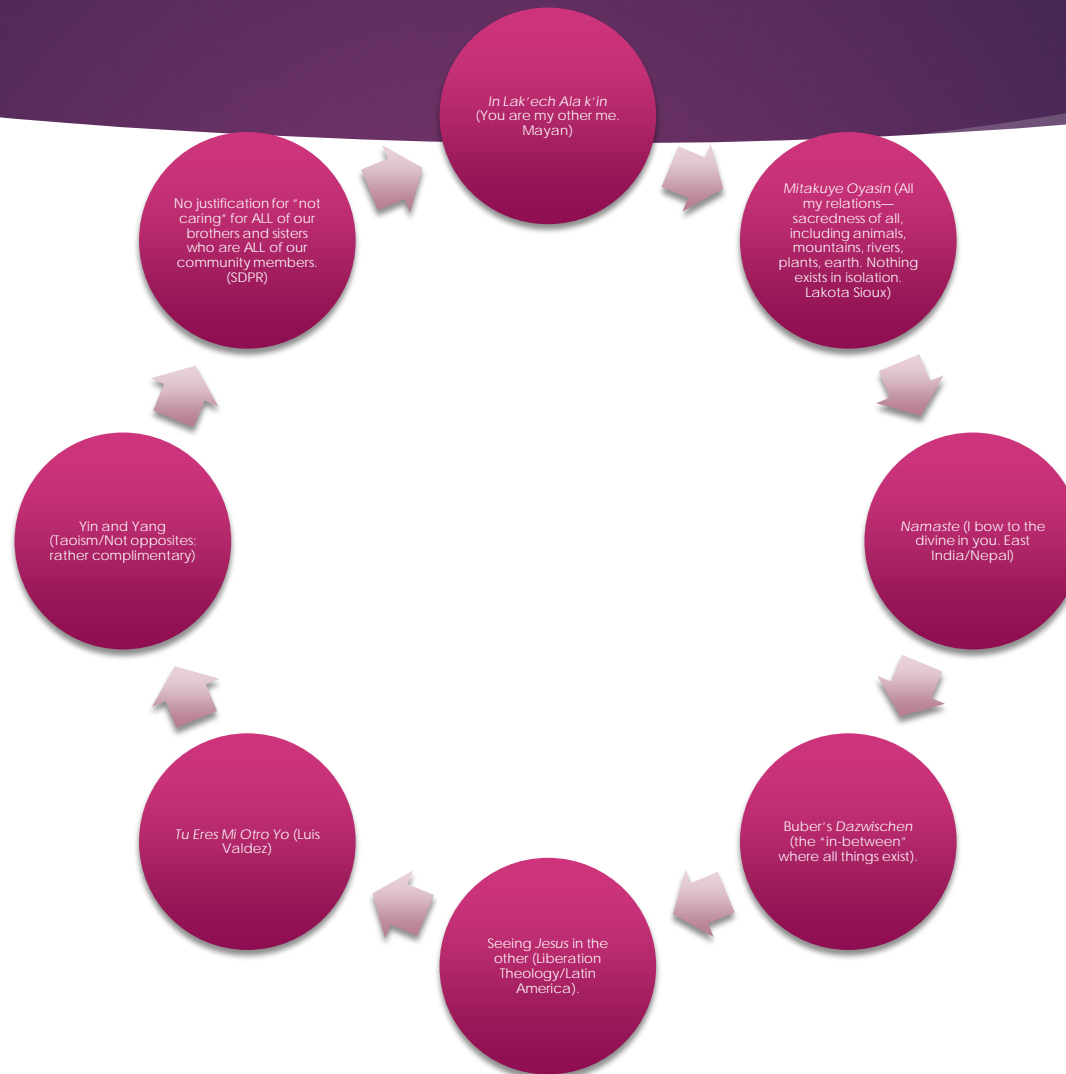
- ▶ "As a society, we are happy to help and serve the poor, as long as we don't have to walk *with* them where they walk, that is, as long as we can minister to them from our safe enclosures. The poor can then remain passive objects of our actions, rather than friends, *compañeros* and *compañeras* with whom we interact. As long as we can be sure that we will not have to live with them, and thus have interpersonal relationships with them... we will try to help 'the poor'—but, again, only from a controllable, geographical distance."
- ▶ --Roberto Goizueta--

# How do we get “to the promise land?”

- ▶ Some things to think about...
- ▶ Must be honest and clear about our own situation or reality (Evaluate)
- ▶ Must not represent/support reality for it reproduces the same and leads to tinkering (reproduction of inequities). The Band-Aid approach. (Analyze)
- ▶ Instead must (re) present possibilities (transformation toward equity) (Act).
- ▶ Focus is “Park and Recreation” but should be placed in the larger framework of “building a healthy, safe, vibrant, and dignified community for ALL”



# Dignity as Policy: Replacing Individualistic Worldviews with Worldviews of Connectedness



- ▶ *In Lak'ech Ala k'in* (You are my other me. Mayan)
- ▶ *Mitakuye Oyasin* (All my relations—sacredness of all, including animals, mountains, rivers, plants, earth. Nothing exists in isolation. Lakota Sioux)
- ▶ *Namaste* (I bow to the divine in you. East India/Nepal)
- ▶ Buber's *Dazwischen* (the "in-between" where all things exist).
- ▶ Seeing *Jesus* in the other (Liberation Theology/Latin America).
- ▶ *Tu Eres Mi Otro Yo* (Luis Valdez)
- ▶ Yin and Yang (Taoism/Not opposites; rather complimentary)
- ▶ No justification for "not caring" for ALL of our brothers and sisters who are ALL of our community members.

# Equity is not a foreign concept!

- ▶ We engage in equity ALL the time.
- ▶ Examples of children needs: we act in equitable manner with respect to time, money, food, and other resources on a daily basis.
- ▶ Barry University
- ▶ Participatory Budgeting
- ▶ All based on the idea of real family, real connectedness. When this is the assumption, equity makes perfect sense.

# Park and Recreation Members as “Agents of Change”

- ▶ ***“You are the Social Change that you’ve been waiting for!”*** --Attributed often to Mahatma Gandhi--
- ▶ This idea does several important things to transform ourselves:
  - ▶ 1. It forces us to self reflect and not judge others
  - ▶ 2. It requires us to take action affirmatively
  - ▶ 3. It asks us to become a “public servant” to the betterment of humanity



# Conclusion

## ► “Blessing on the World”

- Let us look calmly and honestly at ourselves, and we will discover that we too have those same basic desires for recognition, for importance... We all want to be important, to surpass others, to achieve distinction, to lead the parade... It's a good instinct if you don't distort it and pervert it. Don't give it up. Keep feeling the need for being important. Keep feeling the need for being first. But I want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity.
- If you want to be important—wonderful. If you want to be recognized—wonderful. If you want to be great—wonderful. But recognize that he [or she] who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That's a new definition of greatness. Let us all aim to be truly great, so that ***our lives may be a blessing on the world!***
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—

Thank You  
and  
Questions???