

Achieving Health Equity

launching a
national campaign against racism

Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH, PhD

Health Equity Roundtable

“The Urgency of Now”

47th Annual Legislative Conference

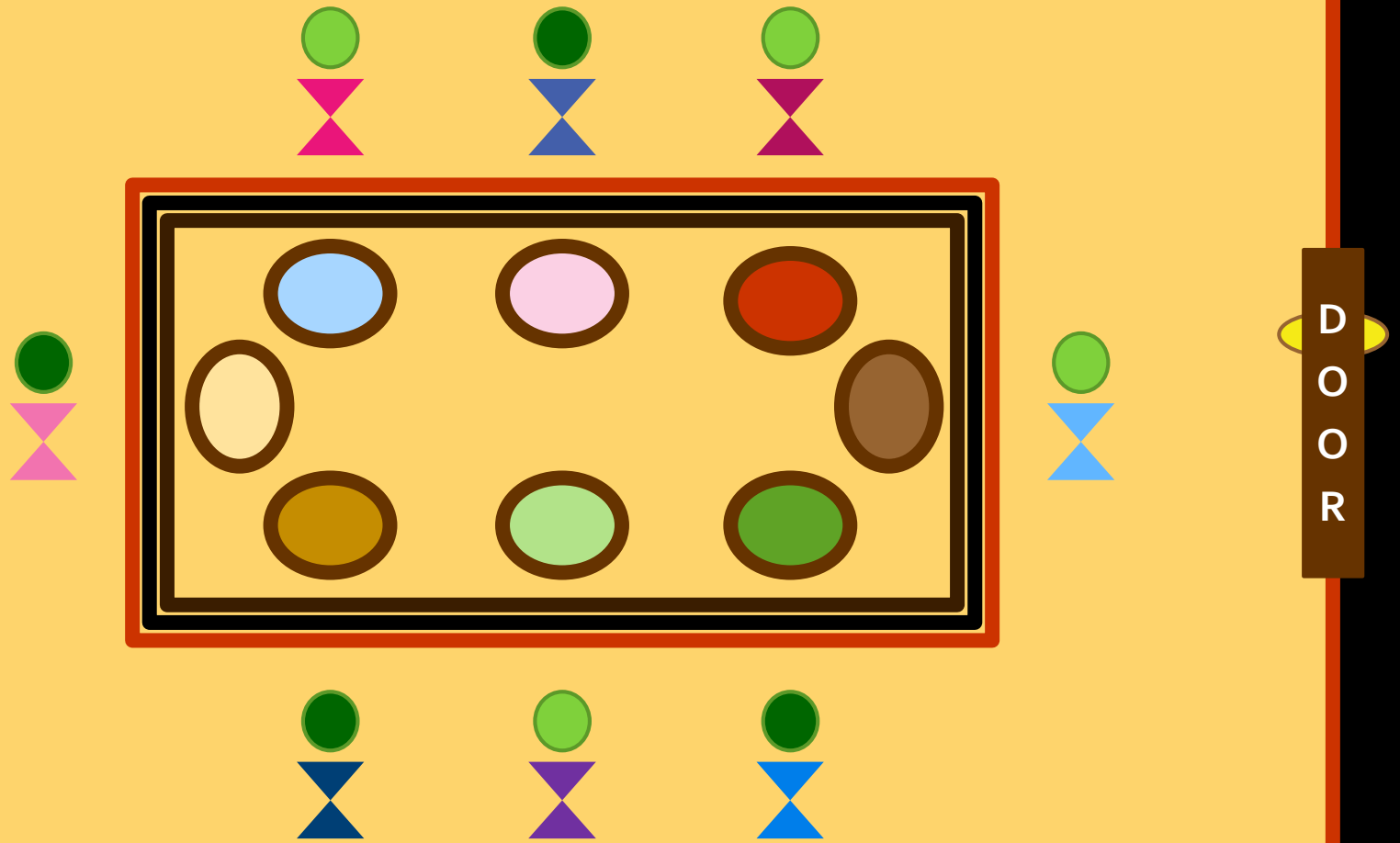
Congressional Black Caucus Foundation

Washington, DC

September 20, 2017

Dual Reality: A restaurant saga





I looked up and noticed a sign . . .

OPEN

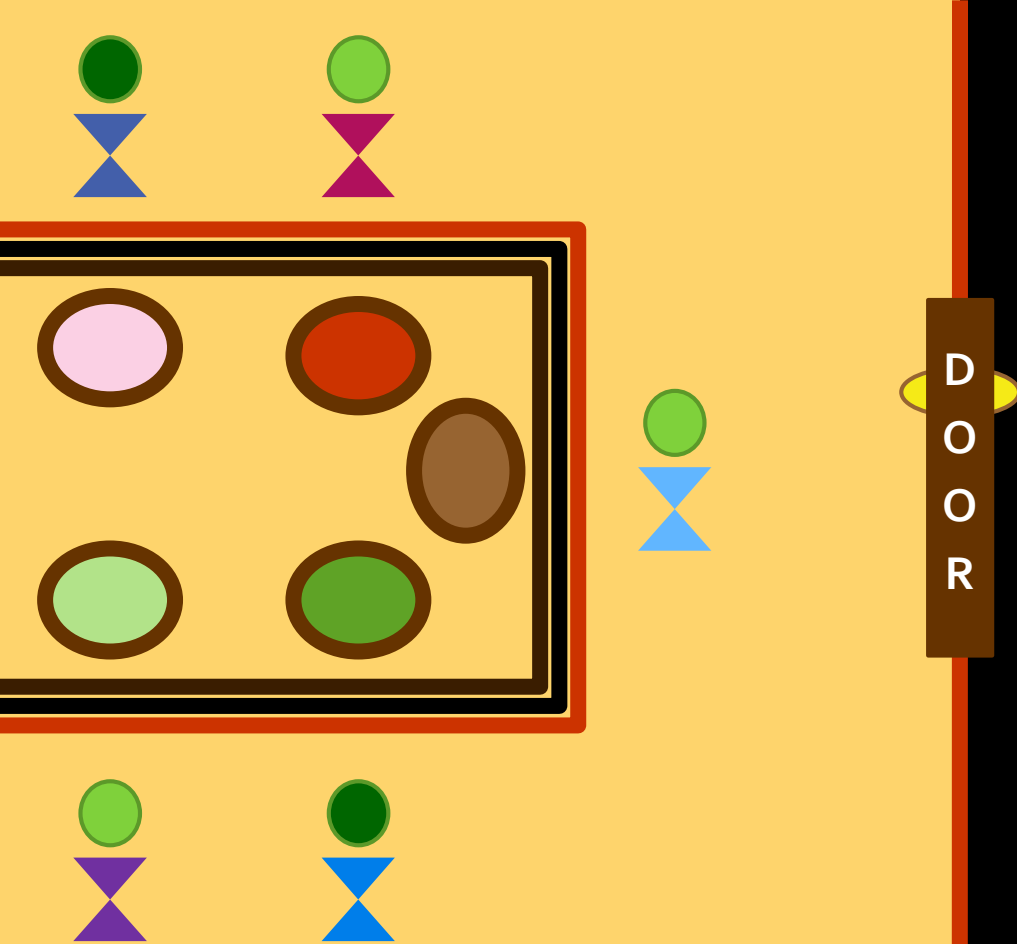


A sign with the word "CLOSED" in red, white, and blue. The word is written in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are red with a white outline and a blue drop shadow. The sign is set against a white background, which is framed by a blue border, and the entire sign is on a yellow background.

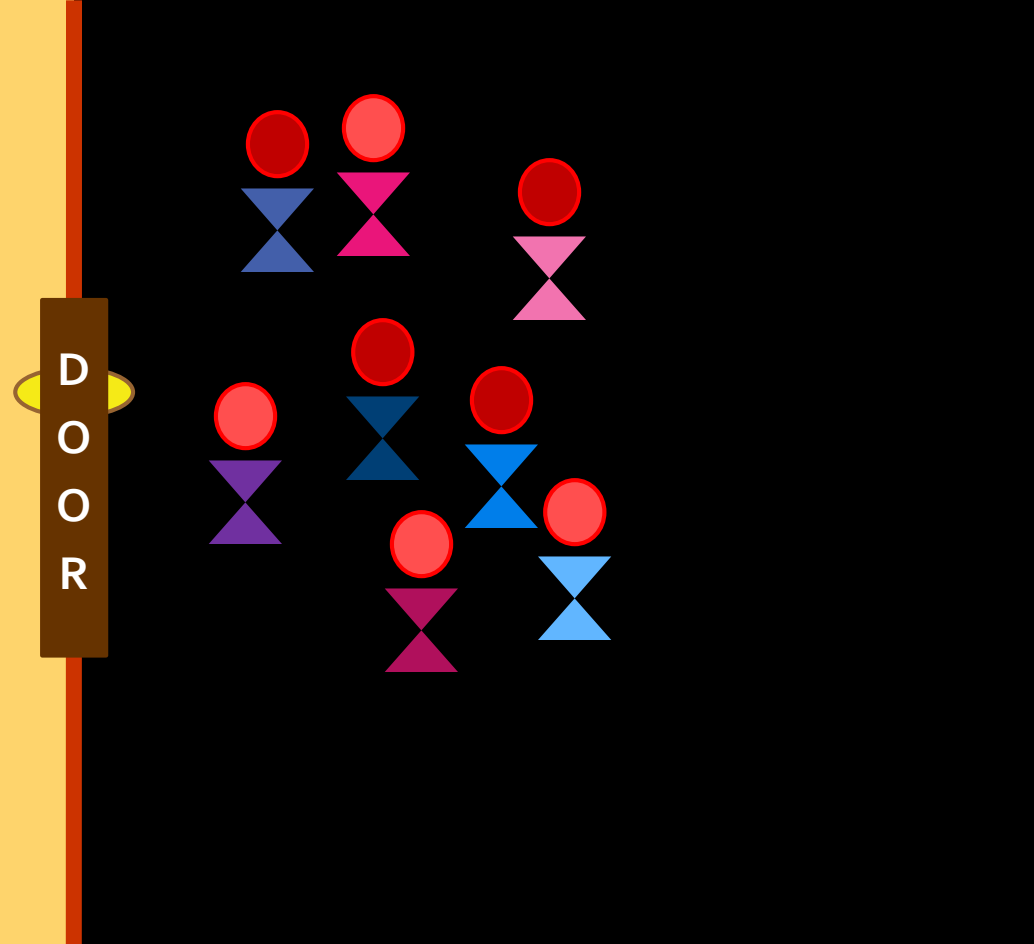
CLOSED

A solid yellow circle.

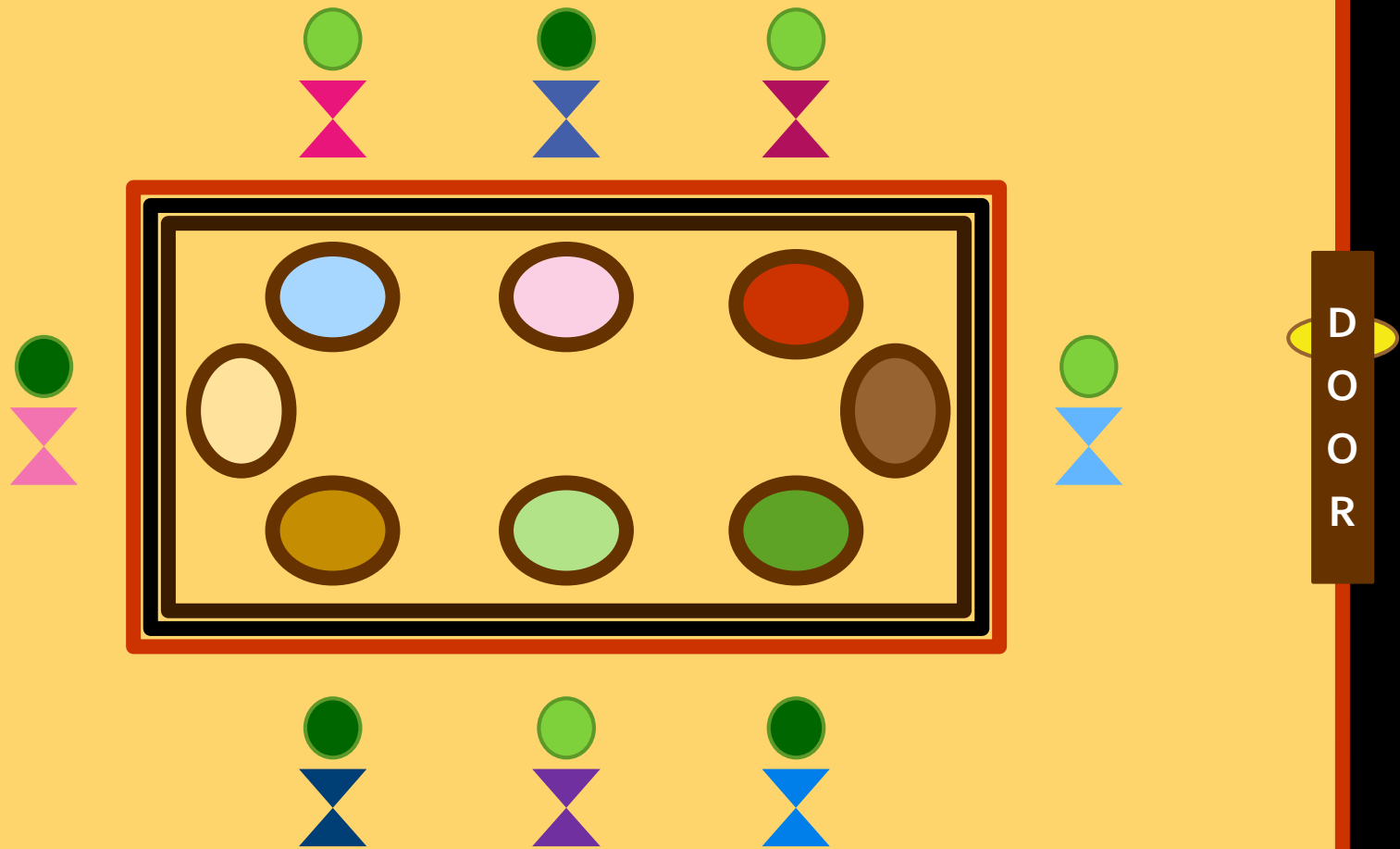
Racism structures “Open/Closed”
signs in our society.



It is difficult
to recognize
a system of inequity
that privileges us.



Those on the outside
are very aware of the
two-sided nature
of the sign.



Is there really a two-sided sign?

Hard to know, when only see "Open".
A privilege not to HAVE to know.
Once DO know, can choose to act.

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A system

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A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call “race”), that

- Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
- Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
- Saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources

What is health equity?

- ❑ “Health equity” is assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people
- ❑ Achieving health equity requires
 - Valuing all individuals and populations equally
 - Recognizing and rectifying historical injustices
 - Providing resources according to need
- ❑ Health disparities will be eliminated when health equity is achieved

Barriers to achieving health equity

❑ **Narrow focus on the individual**

- Self-interest narrowly defined
- Limited sense of interdependence
- Limited sense of collective efficacy
- Systems and structures as invisible or irrelevant

❑ **A-historical culture**

- The present as disconnected from the past
- Current distribution of advantage/disadvantage as happenstance
- Systems and structures as givens and immutable

❑ **Myth of meritocracy**

- Role of hard work
- Denial of racism
- Two babies: Equal potential or equal opportunity?

ICERD

- ❑ *International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination*

International anti-racism treaty adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1965

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>

- ❑ US signed in 1966
- ❑ US ratified in 1994

Current status

- ❑ 3rd US report submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2013
http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fUSA%2f7-9&Lang=en
- ❑ 82 parallel reports submitted by civil society organizations
- ❑ CERD considered at its 85th session (13-14 Aug 2014)

CERD *Concluding Observations*

- ❑ **14-page document (25 Sep 2014) available online**
http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fUSA%2fCO%2f7-9&Lang=en

- ❑ **Concerns and recommendations**
 - Racial profiling (paras 8 and 18)
 - Residential segregation (para 13)
 - Achievement gap in education (para 14)
 - Differential access to health care (para 15)
 - Disproportionate incarceration (para 20)

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- ❑ **Concerns and recommendations**
 - “The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a national action plan to combat structural racial discrimination” (para 25)

 - “The Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to raise public awareness and knowledge of the Convention throughout its territory” (para 32)

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Levels of Racism

- ❑ Institutionalized
- ❑ Personally-mediated
- ❑ Internalized

Institutionalized racism

- ❑ Differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society, by “race”

- ❑ Examples
 - Housing, education, employment, income
 - Medical facilities
 - Clean environment
 - Information, resources, voice

- ❑ Explains the association between social class and “race”

Personally-mediated racism

- ❑ Differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intents of others, by “race”
- ❑ Differential actions based on those assumptions

- ❑ Prejudice and discrimination
- ❑ Examples
 - Police brutality
 - Physician disrespect
 - Shopkeeper vigilance
 - Waiter indifference
 - Teacher devaluation

Internalized racism

- ❑ Acceptance by the stigmatized “races” of negative messages about our own abilities and intrinsic worth

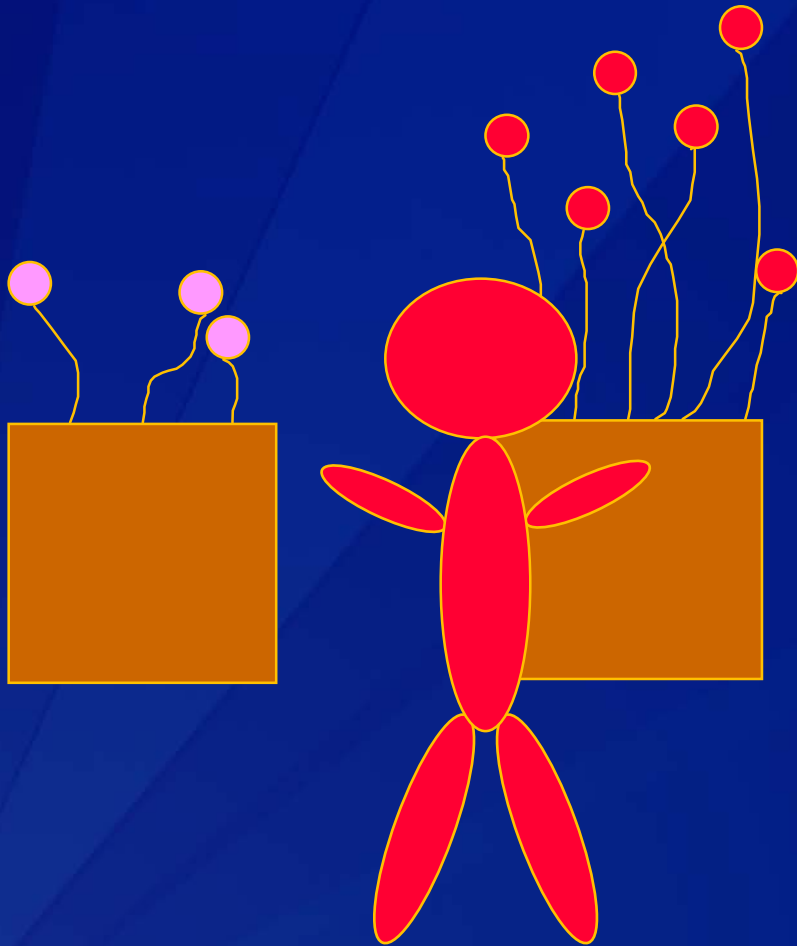
- ❑ Examples
 - Self-devaluation
 - White man’s ice is colder
 - Resignation, helplessness, hopelessness

- ❑ Accepting limitations to our full humanity

Levels of Racism: A Gardener's Tale

Jones CP. Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale. *Am J Public Health* 2000;90(8):1212-1215.

Who is the gardener?



- Power to decide
- Power to act
- Control of resources

■ Dangerous when

- Allied with one group
- Not concerned with equity

“How is racism operating here?”

□ Identify mechanisms

- **Structures:** the *who?, what?, when?,* and *where?* of decision-making
- **Policies:** the written *how?*
- **Practices and norms:** the unwritten *how?*
- **Values:** the *why?*

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