***Uprooting Inequity LLC’s* -Univ. of California at Merced**

**Seminar #2:**

**The Historical Reproduction of Anti-Black Racism**

**Description:** This seminar answers the questions:

1. *“Why has there been so little progress in racial economic equity in the 57 years since the Civil Rights Act?”*
2. *“Why do most Americans so vastly overestimate racial economic progress?”*

White resistance to racial progress—not just explicit white backlash but also covert resistance such as ‘opportunity hoarding’—has led to the historical reproduction of racial disparities and segregation in new forms, the stymying of initiatives to repair historical discrimination, and the development of greatly overestimated myths of racial progress. Throughout our history, outlawed forms of racial discrimination have repeatedly been reproduced in more legally and morally acceptable forms: ostensibly “race-neutral” policies that have racially disparate impact. These policies have racially disparate impacts because they are based on either geography or wealth, which are products of historical discrimination and thus act as proxies for race.

**OUTLINE/NOTES:**

1. Introduction:
   1. *“Why has there been so little progress in racial economic equity in the 57 years since the Civil Rights Act?”*
   2. *“Why do most Americans so vastly overestimate racial economic progress?”*
2. **The civil rights acts only outlawed future discrimination; they did not repair the accumulated gains of past discrimination, which continue to impact the present:**
   1. The persistent impact of the historical racial wealth gap
   2. The persistent impact of historical racial segregation (the *“geography of opportunity”*)
3. **Racial discrimination and segregation were reproduced in race-neutral forms *(“colorblind racism”* or *“racism without racists”*), with wealth and geography acting as proxies**
   1. Slavery was reproduced with contract leasing and debt peonage.
   2. Segregated neighborhoods were reproduced with exclusionary zoning, etc.
   3. Segregated schools were reproduced with neighborhood schools, private schools, selective schools, school district secessions, school redistricting, etc.
   4. Voting restrictions were reproduced with felony disenfranchisement, redistricting, photo ID laws, voter roll purges, etc.
   5. Racial disparities in the criminal justice system were reproduced with the war on drugs, etc.
4. **POLICY LEVEL: The perversion of “colorblindness” led to civil rights laws being interpreted as only prohibiting intentional racial discrimination *(“disparate treatment”* or *“intention to discriminate”*)—and not segregation or racially disparate outcomes themselves *(“disparate impact”*). This lead to:**
   1. Rollback of affirmative action and race-conscious efforts to correct racial disparities
   2. Civil rights acts used more often to protect whites from “reverse racism”
   3. Rollback of civil rights protections: release of schools from federal desegregation orders (early 1990s), gutting of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act (2013), and rollback of civil rights protections in K-12 public schools and in housing.
5. **INDIVIDUAL LEVEL: Economic and social-status incentives lead people who benefit from systems of inequity to:**
   1. Support policies that reinforce these systems, and to engage in individual behavior that reinforces these systems *(“opportunity hoarding”*).
   2. This is often true even when they support racial and economic equity in principle (the principle-policy gap and principle-practice gap).
6. **Politico-cultural narratives and myths rationalize this reproduction of racial disparities and segregation**
   1. Cultural narratives about “rugged individualism,” “equal opportunity,” and “the American Dream”
   2. Myths about “the civil rights acts ended racism”, racial economic progress, and America as a colorblind/post-racial society
   3. Myths about affirmative action
   4. Myths about black cultural inferiority
7. Conclusion:
   1. *“Why has there been so little progress in racial economic equity in the 57 years since the Civil Rights Act?”*
   2. *“Why do most Americans so vastly overestimate racial economic progress?”*