

# Race and Reconciliation Initiative

## Truth

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**TCU**

## Race & Reconciliation Initiative

### Introduction

Founded in 1873, TCU like many institutions in American society finds itself at a societal crossroads. It has been asked to assess and address one of its earliest racial histories - its relationship with African-Americans. One of the cornerstones of this endeavor is truth, and a contextual accounting of the past that can lead to a constructive future. "Truth-telling" is an established redress in accounting for societal failures and tensions, particularly when one group has subjugated or benefited from the subjugation of another group. In TCU's case, the university is attempting to understand its institutional role, its role in communities, such as higher education and Fort Worth, as well as whether it benefitted from local, state and national policies set to hinder Black people.

### Truth-Telling

Modern-day lessons in truth-telling, which abound, include the Nuremberg Trials that examined Nazi Germany and post-apartheid South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined the events of Nov. 3, 1979 when members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi Party fired into a racially mixed crowd, killing five and injuring 10. More recently, events in higher education have prompted universities to examine their histories. The [Association for Colleges and Universities](#) has helped at 29 institutions host campus centers dedicated to

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Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation. These centers are meant to address “structural barriers to equal treatment and opportunity on campuses, in our communities, and for out nation around the pillars of the TRHT Framework: narrative change, racial healing and relationship building, separation, law, and economy<sup>1</sup>.

Yancy describes “truth-telling,” as an effort to “remove the masks that we wear” or “the games that we play to avoid the truths of life.”<sup>2</sup> This underscores the purpose of RRI. Its critics have in effect accused TCU of wearing a mask, a perhaps blinders, when it comes to contextualizing its racial history. But removing the masks has proven to be a daunting task.

In seeking truth, it has become common to establish a “truth commission.”<sup>3</sup> This practice has been widely used since the 1970s in the context of nations where human rights violations were committed, as well as in consideration of civil rights violations. Appel and Loyle describe commissions as being tasked with investigating, “past wrongdoings by a group of authorities, such as a community of church leaders, historians, or human rights experts. The truth commissions are designed in varied ways, but their missions are the same. Typically, truth commissions create a forum where wrongs can be disclosed, examined, and confronted through education, prosecution, compensation, or other forms of redress.”<sup>4</sup>

However, it is important to recognize the limitations and possible pitfalls of this approach. David and Choi note that these transitional justice efforts can and have evolved into exercises of retribution.<sup>5</sup> Without a direct and deliberate purpose the very actions meant to heal a rift, can exacerbate tensions. Any redress needs to consider and address the

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<sup>1</sup> “Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers,” Association of American Colleges & Universities, <https://www.aacu.org/trht-campus-centers>

<sup>2</sup> Yancy, George. “The Practice of Philosophy: Truth-Telling, Vulnerability, and Risk.” *Philosophy Today*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2018, p. 1255-1275.

<sup>3</sup> Lundy, Patricia and Mark McGovern, “Whose Justice?” Rethinking Transitional Justice from the Bottom Up,” *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 35, no. 2, June 2008, p. 265-92

<sup>4</sup> Appel, Benjamin and Cyanne E. Loyle. “Truth-Telling Leads to Racial Healing, Studies of Other Countries Show.” *Yes! Solutions Journalism*, 29th June 2020. <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2020/06/29/racial-healing-reparations-truth-reconciliation/>

<sup>5</sup> David, Roman and Susanne Y.P. Choi. “Getting Even or Getting Equal? Retributive Desires and Transitional Justice.” *Political Psychology*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2009

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power dynamics at play. Measures that the community at-large may deem appropriate, could fail to live up to the expectations of the offended community.

David and Choi suggest grouping policies as reparatory, retributive and reconciliatory.<sup>6</sup> In each case, it's important to recognize the purpose of the policy and who it is intended to benefit.<sup>7</sup>

- Reparatory measures are intended to empower, individually and collectively.
- Retributive measures target those who are considered aggressors.
- Reconciliatory measures meant to promote change that signals the two sides are no longer "unequal."

It's unlikely that TCU will employ any measures that could be construed as "retributive," but it is important to be cognitive of each policy and how it could be perceived. For example, there is already push back on reparatory measures that involve Black people being asked to publicly relive trauma.

Stanley writes that there are inherent risks involved in the work of a truth commission.<sup>8</sup>

- Targets who speak out could face retaliation.
- Committee members could be manipulated in favor of a particular point of view or remedy.
- There is no resolution, which can further harm the targeted or persecuted community.
- Omission of diverse perspectives and experiences that don't adhere to the dominant narrative.
- Committee members who don't listen fully, or to understand.
- Filtering information through a lens of the dominant group.
- Refusal to accept points of view considered radical.
- Censoring information to preserve reputations
- There is no one version of truth.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Stanley, Elizabeth. "What Next? The Aftermath of Organized Truth-Telling." *Race & Class*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2002, p. 1-15.

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## From truth to action

Once a narrative truth is established, substantive change is necessary. It's important to recognize that changing organizational culture can be extremely difficult and requires a long-term commitment. Moving forward there is a need to establish an understanding of cultural dimensions and differences. Reflecting on Fenwick it's clear that TCU must come to an understanding of its cultural or organizational identity and how it's managed.<sup>9</sup>

Change management is heavily influenced by power. Bierema recommends considering goals as moving targets that can be affected by the organizational developmental process.<sup>10</sup> Members of the RRI must be cognizant of the fact that inequitable policies and practices often go unnoticed because they are so intertwined with TCU culture. It is common for developmental opportunities to be unequally distributed in organizations, thus we must ensure this work, and its subsequent interventions, are equitable and accessible to ALL stakeholders.

In this vein, it becomes important: critically analyze the current TCU culture, prioritize racial diversity and equity, and seek to implement a change process that is democratic, inclusive and emancipatory.<sup>11</sup> A cultural analysis should include an examination of physical and psychological space; recognition of the dynamics of position, including how asymmetry influences privilege and prestige; the transactional nature of power and systems that are designed to protect dominant interests.

Organizational interventions, or assessments, will also be required at select points to ensure that people and the institution don't fall back into old patterns. French and Bell define this as "sets of structured activities in which selected organizational units (target groups or individuals) engage in a task or sequence of tasks with the goals of organizational improvement and individual development."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Fenwick, Tara and Lesley Farrell, "Knowledge mobilization and educational research: politics, language and responsibilities," *Routledge* Aug. 18 2011

<sup>10</sup> Bierema, L.L. (2010). *Implementing a critical approach to organization development*. Malabar, FL:Krieger Publishing Company.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> French, W.L., & Bell, C.H. (1999). *Organization development: Behavioral science interventions for organizational improvement* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

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A very important aspect of the change management process for RRI is to use and develop theories, policies, practices and intervention strategies that are ANTI-PERFORMATIVE. We must be prepared to challenge modernist paradigms of organizational development and attempts to impose rationality and neutrality into the change process.<sup>13</sup>

This change effort will require DEconstruction and REconstruction of organizational life, as we are (should be) prepared to challenge the notions of the traditional structure, technology, environment, and what is deemed as “effective” or “appropriate” by those who have a differential power interest in the outcome. Therefore, we must commit to:

1. Question the assumptions and unspoken beliefs which provide the foundation of the TCU “culture”;
2. Bring to the foreground power issues and the ideology subsumed within the social context of TCU’s structures, procedures, policies and practices;
3. Confront claims of rationality and objectivity by revealing the vested interests they conceal; and
4. Work toward an emancipatory, anti-oppression, anti-racist ideal of TCU specifically, and higher education institutions in general (oh, and larger society too!).

## **Factoring in the “Vision in Action”**

Moving forward it will be necessary to assess the “Vision in Action” plan and its future role.

### **Goal 1: Strengthen the Academic Profile and Reputation of TCU**

TCU’s April 2019 Vision in Action report describes the “State of Affairs” of TCU and the higher education landscape, as well as TCU’s growth in “size and splendor... and complexity.” There are two critical risks to be mindful of with this continued growth that are of great importance:

- How we as an institution respond to the “changing, increasingly diverse demographics of the nation and particular in Texas”
- The “changing public and political perception of higher education” related to the relevance, cost and equity of a university education

Progress:

- Test-optional admissions was offered for the first time in the 2020-2021 cycle (entering fall 2021 class); this pilot has been recently approved to continue through the fall 2023 entering class .
- Self-reported test scores are accepted for freshman applicants which allows students to share a screenshot or photocopy of their score report (saving on the

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<sup>13</sup> Bierema, 2010

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cost of ordering official scores) until they potentially enroll, when official scores will become required.

- College diversity advocates established within each academic unit in 2018
- Mandatory online Diversity and Inclusion training for all faculty, staff and students began in July 2020.
- TCU RISE program, launched in fall 2020, offers a semester-long curriculum and certificate for participants through HR and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion.
- Creation of more office and classroom space to support faculty and small class sizes.
- Established the School for Interdisciplinary Studies
  - Majors/programs with cultural components include: African American and Africana Studies, Asian Studies, Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES), Jewish Studies, Latino/a Studies, Middle East Studies, Spanish and Hispanic Studies, Women & Gender Studies (WGST)
- The Neeley School of Business launched a TCU chapter of the National Association of Black Accountants in 2019
- TCU Rising Leaders Institute, offered through the Office of Admission and Student Development Services, for rising high school seniors who are students of color and/or first-generation to develop leadership skills and learn about the college experience

#### Recommendations:

- Continue to increase recruitment of more culturally diverse students, faculty and staff.
- Finalize the proposal to establish a DEI component of the Core Curriculum.
- Develop Summer Bridge and/or Early Arrival programs for students that focus on academic preparation, one-on-one advising, discovering campus resources, and building connection with faculty, staff, and other students.
- High-impact practices such as first-year experience programming will improve student retention and engagement.
  - Improve these by evolving to be more tailored to students' unique needs and challenges.
  - Improve participation rates in these programs by making them more accessible and offering more valuable content.
- Celebrate and educate the TCU community with depth on customs, values, and traditions of different cultures (Black History Month, Native American History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month).
- Allocate sufficient resources to the Student Access & Accommodation office for continued development of student support and success offerings.
  - Reimagining and redesigning our academic advising model is a critical component of improving the experience and the way that we serve our transfer and veteran student populations

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- Going back to the idea of changing U.S. demographics, we must be flexible with our current model; what works for first-year students is not the same for this population and we often do these students a great disservice in the enrollment process
  - From the start, they see that TCU is not “built for them”.
  - Academic storytelling is also a crucial aspect of the growth and sustainment of our academic reputation (specifically, telling the story of our DEI successes and our faculty, staff, students and programs).
  - Along with the notes above about marketing and communication and our “perceived” reputation, TCU’s method of communicating our “points of pride” should look distinct for different stakeholders.
    - Our brand and messaging should be consistent, but the ways that we communicate to 16 and 17-year old’s, transfer and veteran students, prospective faculty, and alumni/prospective donors should be tailored in order to improve the perception and get our message across.
    - It’s not always about who we think we are as an institution, or even who we aspire to be, but also meeting these stakeholders where they are in terms of their current perception of TCU.

## **Goal 2: Strengthen the Endowment**

### Recommendations:

- Demystify the endowment.
  - *“Educate students and parents on how the endowment provides them with access to high quality education and opportunity.”*
- Foster a diverse and inclusive university for all.
  - *“Increase endowed scholarship support to create a more ethnically, socio-economically, and geographically diverse student population that better prepares all students to relate to the global community in their lives and careers”*
  - \$10 million gift received to provide scholarships for students from middle-income families.
  - Development of the STEM Scholars program, a full-ride scholarship for traditionally underrepresented students in STEM field.
  - Strong growth of the Community Scholars Program, with the recent addition of 2 schools: Barack Obama Male Leadership Academy and Young Men’s Leadership Academy.
  - Utilizing the RaiseMe microscholarship platform to offer funding to students who may not receive academic scholarship from the university.
  - We are members of the Yellow Ribbon program which provides access to veterans through the Post 9-11 GI Bill; 100% tuition coverage is available.
- Encourage student success through an integrated and holistic student-support model.

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- *“Increase funding for an integrated student-success model, inclusive of academic advising, career services, and disability services.”*
  - Development of the Student Access & Accommodation office pulls together many services under one umbrella to best offer “access, accommodations, alliance, and assistance.”
  - As outlined above under Goal 1, it’s especially critical to evaluate elements of our academic advising model.
  - Tell the compelling stories of TCU and its students, faculty and staff.
    - *“The story of endowed scholarships changing students’ lives... educating the community on the nature of endowed positions... increase recognition on the institution’s “celebrity” faculty and staff.”*
    - Similar to academic storytelling, developing methods to articulate these “points of pride” is critical.

### **Goal 3: Strengthen the TCU Experience and Campus Culture**

- **“An inclusive TCU will be a place where all are welcome and no one is excluded on any rational basis--happy, healthy place with a deep soul.”**
  - We read the above quote as a thesis, the Board’s best hopes from Goal 3 in the Vision in Action Report, and we are encouraged by its contents. We understand the vision presented by the Board in this sentence as the Board’s efforts move towards a campus community where all are welcomed as they are: a happy and healthy place where we welcome all fellow and prospective Horned Frogs with open arms.
- To the date, many events have taken place that give students the opportunity to connect, collaborate, and engage with one another in the spirit of inclusivity. These events include (The following information was retrieved directly from TCU’s ODI 2018-2020 Report):
  - **Luncheon Speaker**--Dr. Frederick Gooding presented a lecture on his book, *American Dream Deferred: Black Federal Workers in Washington, D.C. 1941-1981*.
  - **Faculty, Staff, and Student Mixer**--The TCU student chapter of the NAACP and Office of Diversity & Inclusion hosted a student, faculty and staff mixer in fall 2019 allowing attendees to meet and mingle. Faculty and staff also had an opportunity to offer advice to navigate a successful college experience and answer questions from students
  - **Club and Organization Visit**-- In fall 2018, the director of Office of Diversity and Inclusion and chief inclusion officer met with clubs and organizations to extend an offer of support with future programs. Organizations included the undergraduate chapter of Spectrum, International Student Association, United Latino Association, Naturally Mi, African Student Organization and Word of Truth Gospel Choir.

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- **Hispanic Heritage Month**--Luncheon co-sponsorship with Inclusiveness & Intercultural Services and Office of Diversity & Inclusion. Guest Speaker Bianca Soria-Olmos, Ph.D. '07 discussed her journey through medicine.
  - **"Crimmigration" Presentation**--Luis Romero, Ph.D., assistant professor of comparative race and ethnic studies, gave a presentation titled "Crimmigration: Origins and Consequences in the United States Intersections of Criminal Law and Immigration Law." He discussed how the nation entered the current crimmigration regime and his work on immigration detention.
  - **"Check Your Blind Spots" Mobile Tour**--A total of 267 faculty, staff and students participated in the "Check Your Blind Spots" tour experience in April 2019, sponsored by CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion. "Check Your Blind Spots" is part of a national effort to explore and mitigate unconscious bias— a.k.a. blind spots—that can shape our judgments about people. The tour uses virtual reality and gamification techniques to address personal biases and drive inclusive behaviors. It also exposed participants to the nuances of unconscious bias to change behaviors. The story aired on CBS 11 News.
  - **Martin Luther King, Jr. Luncheon**--The Jan. 15, 2020 luncheon, "A Call to Action: Continuing the Dream," reflected on the history and significance of Dr. King's legacy. This inaugural celebration included a historical and inspirational message by Bob Ray Sanders and a performance by the TCU Word of Truth Gospel Choir.
  - **End-of-Year Gathering**--Before the end of the spring semester, faculty and staff of color are invited to an end-of-year gathering. Past gatherings were held at Cityview Lanes and Top Golf. The event scheduled for spring 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19.
  - **Office of Diversity & Inclusion Tailgate**--In appreciation of everyone's efforts, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion thanked the campus community for its commitment and support in developing, hosting and encouraging more inclusive programs and strategies at TCU by hosting a tailgate social before the Baylor vs. TCU home game.
  - **"Encourage student success through an integrated and holistic student-support model"**
    - We would like to recognize the Board's desire for student success, that we believe this shows that the board is willing to support TCU's student needs in totality so that students may grow and develop

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efficiently through a holistic student-support model. We are hopeful in this message, particularly about meeting the mental health needs of the entire Student body in addition to specific populations, the recognition of a distinction a vital step in the right direction in promoting the well being of our entire community.

- **“Catalyze a culture of connection at TCU”**
  - In this section, the Board communicates their plans and desire for support and mentorship/professional development of TCU’s newly highered and BIPOC faculty and staff. We appreciate the Board’s diligence in nurturing our faculty and staff, and we agree that in doing so, we will nurture the culture of connection brought about by our unique classroom experience.
- **“Tell the compelling stories of TCU and its students, faculty, and staff”**
  - In this, we feel the Board has been exemplary. Not only is the Board telling our stakeholder’s compelling stories, but doing so in such a way that deepens our soul through authenticity. The RRI project gives TCU the opportunity to move toward a brighter future where we can love one another in our totality, as Horned Frogs.

#### **Goal 4: Strengthen the TCU Workforce**

- **“A Commitment to the culture of Texas Christian University” Recommendations/Suggestions**

- The Board and TCU Leadership reflect on the specific details of what this preferred future looks like to them and how they will recognize progress is being made:
  - What does an inclusive place look like to TCU leadership? How will we recognize progress in the Board’s conception of an inclusive place? What does a welcoming place look like? How will we recognize that TCU is welcoming? How will we recognize a rational basis of welcoming instead of an irrational basis? What does a happy and healthy TCU Campus look like and how will we recognize it? How will we know that we have a deep soul?