BOSTON. RACISM. IMAGE. REALITY. SOLUTIONS

A BETTER BOSTON? THE CHOICE IS OURS

SPOTLIGHT-LOGO CREATED WITH SKETCH. THE SPOTLIGHT TEAM
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The series was reported by Andrew Ryan, Nicole Dungca, Akilah Johnson, Liz Kowalczyk, Adrian Walker, Todd Wallack, and editor Patricia Wen.

Illustrations by Jawaan Burge

On the final day of the series, we look at perhaps the most important topic of all in terms of the image and reality of racism in Boston: possible solutions.

The Spotlight Team set out to examine the degree of truth behind Boston's

enduring image as a place inhospitable to blacks. After hundreds of interviews and extensive data analysis, we concluded that even as the city's racial climate is better than before, there remain striking inequities of wealth, opportunity, and clout. Even amid greater tolerance, there are subtle yet powerful racist attitudes, often in systemic forms.

Our reporters write here about ideas heard through the course of their work, from how to navigate racially sensitive conversations to overhauling parts of government itself. There are seven ideas, gleaned from successes that we witnessed or discussed with key people, here and elsewhere, on topics ranging from better workforce diversity to a more contemporary and inclusive marketing image for the city.

The eighth idea is represented by a box that is intentionally left blank. It is a place to share your thoughts, ideas, and hopes. That is our way of signaling that we don't wish to have the final word. We look forward to hearing more ideas, and we hope that the conversation will continue.

1. Look in the mirror (and that means us)

By Todd Wallack

Those who aspire to make Boston a more welcoming place for everyone say companies have to look at themselves.

So we took a close look at The Boston Globe newsroom's record on hiring and promoting minorities.

Like many companies in the region, the Globe has long struggled with diversity issues, both in terms of hiring and in providing news coverage that reflects our fast-changing population.

To its credit, the Globe was one of only three for-profit companies we contacted that agreed to provide detailed diversity data. But the numbers are sobering.

Among the 240 newsroom employees, 83 percent were classified as white, 6 percent black, 5 percent Hispanic, and 6 percent Asian, as of the end of 2016.

The percentage of black workers is slightly less than the makeup of the Greater Boston region for African-Americans, which is 7 percent, and far below the city's, which is 23 percent.

The numbers for managers are worse. Just 4 percent of the newsroom's 72 managers were black — none of them members of the newsroom's top leadership team. Including the Globe's business and production employees, just 2 percent of managers were black as of September, about the same as it was 34 years ago when the Globe published a series raising questions about the lack of black workers in management and other top positions at local firms. The Globe's newsroom numbers mirror results from the 2017 American Society of News Editors survey, which found newsrooms are significantly less diverse than the nation as a whole.

The editor of the Globe, Brian McGrory, said he is committed to undertaking new initiatives to promote more diversity. He said his goal is for the newsroom to reflect at least the demographics of the Greater Boston region.

"We cover our community best when our newsroom reflects our community," he said. "This can be difficult given the challenges our industry faces, but this project has inspired us to redouble our efforts."

McGrory said he will start next year mandating that managers consider at least one minority candidate for all openings and make bonuses partly contingent on recruiting and retaining minority journalists.

He said he will implement a mentorship program early next year to ensure new minority hires get help from seasoned journalists. He will also explore partnerships with college journalism programs to audit the Globe's coverage for fairness in covering minority communities.

In addition, he plans to hire the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, a nonprofit dedicated to promoting diversity in the media, to help train journalists to make sure the paper's coverage is, to the extent possible, free of unconscious racial bias.

Hollis R. Towns, executive editor for the Asbury Park Press, who won a national award for diversity leadership last year and cochairs the American Society of News Editors diversity committee, said many media organizations find it difficult to focus on diversity right now because they face enormous pressure to cut costs.

Martin Reynolds, co-executive director of the Maynard Institute, cautioned that there is no simple fix to making sure a newsroom accurately covers communities of color.

"It is a commitment to a long road," Reynolds said.

2. Market the city in all its glory

By Akilah Johnson

Some advice to the city's image makers: Boston's racial diversity needs to be reflected in its tourism websites, promotional videos, and event listings.

Black travelers would be hard-pressed to see themselves reflected in the tourism section of the city's website or that of the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau, a nonprofit that serves as the primary tourism marketing organization for the region.

There was not a single black person or black cultural event listed on the bureau's homepage in November, and only glimpses of black people — such as a black vendor selling food — in the one-minute, 53-second video featuring Walsh and Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker.

In the video, Walsh tells the world: "Whenever you want to come visit, get ready for a spirited Boston welcome."

And just who does Boston go out of its way to welcome?

International visitors, if the website is any indication. It features tourism videos in Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Chinese.

The way a city markets itself is about more than dollars and cents, travel experts say. It is also about showcasing what a place values and prioritizes.

David O'Donnell, spokesman for the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau, said in an e-mail that budget constraints limit the groups that they can target.

"We made the decision to focus on specific themes and international visitors," O'Donnell said, adding that themes included culinary and craft beers, history and heritage, and special Boston event.

He added that the bureau has a multicultural committee, which in addition to African-American history, "promotes Irish Heritage, Native-American Heritage, and LGBT Boston."

Laura Mandala, managing director of a market research firm that published a 2011 study on African-American travel that she is in the

process of updating, says, “How one city determines that African-American travelers rise to the top of their priority list and another does not isn’t something I can speak to,” she said. “What I can say is . . . there’s lip service that [diversity] is important, but there aren’t dollars being put behind it.”

Some cities, such as San Francisco and Philadelphia, are intentional about marketing themselves as diverse cities and places that welcome black travelers.

“In times like these, people are more sensitive to diversity, and we want to show the nature of the destination,” said Laurie Armstrong Gossy, spokeswoman for the San Francisco Travel Association.

San Francisco’s black population is about 5 percent, compared with Boston’s 23 percent. Yet on San Francisco’s main tourism website, a one-minute, 12-second video features a diverse array of people — black, white, Latino, Asian, Muslim, Sikh, and gay — promoting the city’s #AlwaysWelcome campaign.

“San Francisco doesn’t just welcome your differences. We encourage them. We celebrate them,” the narrator at the beginning of the video says.

Philadelphia, where African-Americans make up 41 percent of the population, went a step further, actively courting black travelers. The city produced “We Got You: Philly by Tarik,” a Web-based travel series, featuring Tarik “Black Thought” Trotter of Grammy Award-winning hip-hop band The Roots.

“We wanted to talk to African-American travelers,” said Meryl Levitz, president and chief executive of Visit Philadelphia, adding that cities must

invite people, then give them clear reasons to visit. “Cities have started to realize that not everybody feels like they’re going to be necessarily welcomed . . . [or] that there’ll be stuff they want to do.”

But highlighting a city’s diversity is about more than fostering good will. Cities leave millions of dollars on the table. Levitz said about 11 percent of the more than 42 million annual visitors to Philadelphia are African-American travelers who spend about $676 million a year.

3. Change the charter, share the power

By Andrew Ryan

Here's a radical solution that could empower more black politicians: Rewrite Boston's city charter to dilute the powerful authority of the mayor's position, an office dominated by a succession of 48 white men since its creation in 1822.

Boston could add new elected offices, creating competing municipal power centers that could give more opportunity for people of color. New York elects a municipal watchdog called a public advocate. Chicago voters elect the city clerk and a city treasurer. Philadelphia and Los Angeles have independently elected fiscal watchdogs.

Even Portland, Ore., elects a city auditor.

Or Boston could confer real power to its City Council. Critics argue that Boston's strong-mayor form of government concentrates so much budgetary and appointment authority in one office that it limits alternative paths to power — and stifles opportunities for new political talent.

By statute, Boston mayors have such a monopoly that an incumbent has not lost in nearly seven decades — and that mayor had been to prison. Twice.

"I believe it is the most powerful political role in the state," said state Representative Russell E. Holmes of Mattapan. "That's why the former mayor kept that job for so long."

The invincibility of Boston mayors is no accident. In a 1909 overhaul of its local constitution, the city adopted the strong-mayor system in part to dilute the strength of a growing minority, the Irish. Boston a century ago

had a sprawling, decentralized government dominated by ward bosses like John “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald. As the ranks of Irish swelled, the Yankee establishment took action, Charlie Tebbetts wrote in a 2004 article in the Historical Journal of Massachusetts.

The Yankee establishment revamped government to concentrate almost all power in the mayor’s office. The ploy backfired. The establishment’s handpicked mayoral candidate, James Jackson Storrow, lost to Honey Fitz, who would become the maternal grandfather of President John F. Kennedy.

Boston’s City Council has so little clout that Mayor Martin J. Walsh’s administration did not initially include the council on a 2014 organizational chart mapping out the power structure at City Hall.

Unlike some other major cities, Boston’s City Council does not approve the mayor’s Cabinet chiefs, have direct authority over zoning, or have broad power over the city’s finances. The 13-member body must approve the mayor’s budget for the city, but the council cannot increase spending, shift resources among departments, or veto individual line items.

The city councils in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, among others, have authority beyond Boston’s, such as in budget matters and appointments.

Changing Boston’s charter would face high hurdles. The governor and state Legislature must approve. Perhaps more important, the mayor would have to be willing to sign off and willingly cede power. In an interview, Walsh dismissed the notion and said changing the charter has nothing to do with the city’s race issues.

"If you're a councilor, there's ways of working the system," he said. "The council has all ample opportunity to work with the mayor or work against the mayor."

4. Get creative about recruitment

By Nicole Dungca

Located in an overwhelmingly white county two hours away from Boston, Amherst College might not seem like the ideal haven for minority students — or one that has any lessons for corporate America.

But the small liberal arts college has long been known for its success attracting diverse students: 12 percent of its students were black in 2015, according to federal data.

Katie Fretwell, Amherst's dean of admissions and financial aid, said some of that derives from a generous financial aid policy. But Fretwell said a huge factor is expanding its recruitment to institutions that are often overlooked, such as public high schools with largely low-income and minority populations.

"We're going to where they are," she said. "We know talent exists everywhere, and we reach pockets of talent that weren't looking at us."

She described Amherst recruiters who visited some small charter schools year after year, even if they had no luck enrolling students at first. But once one student from the charter school does enroll at Amherst, she said, recruiting becomes that much easier: That student's younger classmates start to see Amherst as a place where they can flourish.

The same aggressive outreach could also be put to work in the business world.

When there's a job opening, people often turn to their immediate networks, according to Carol Fulp, the president and chief executive of the Partnership, an organization dedicated to supporting a diverse workforce in Boston.

But Fulp said more businesses need to start building relationships with potential employees earlier and tapping more networks that aren't largely white. That can start at the college level, with businesses turning to historically black universities, or state institutions that enroll larger

proportion of African-Americans. In 2015, the University of Massachusetts Boston, for example, had 15 percent black student enrollment, one of the highest in the city.

But it could also mean partnering with college organizations that serve minority students.

This year, Boston College started a “reverse career fair,” where companies such as General Electric and Hill Holliday could set up meetings with various student organizations. Businesses could connect with diverse students interested in finance and management consulting, or first-generation college students.

5. Set tough diversity goals, and enforce them

By Andrew Ryan and Akilah Johnson

Diversity doesn't happen by accident — or with merely good intentions.

Real change requires teeth.

But if you look around the city, there are glimmers of progress.

Massport did more than talk about diversity. The port authority went beyond a minimum hiring benchmark for workers. It made diversity 25 percent of the evaluation score for development bids on Massport-owned

land, making it a key part of whether a firm won the award. The sweeping new policy emphasizes firms owned by women and people of color.

"This is larger than some quota on a job," said Massport board member L. Duane Jackson, who spearheaded the initiative. "This is a game changer. It says to the rest of the world, if you want to develop some of the most valuable real estate in this country, then you have to consider diversity as a component of your team."

Often, goals requiring "women-owned" or "minority-owned" firms have been window dressing that have had little real effect. But at Massport, the first project — a 1,000-plus room Omni hotel — involves black investors, black architects, a black-owned construction firm, and other companies owned by women and people of color. The bidding requirement pushed executives beyond their traditional networks to form new partnerships that expanded opportunities beyond the hotel.

A push for diversity will also be part of the bidding to build on land in Chinatown owned by the Boston Planning and Development Agency. That diversity component does not go as far as Massport's, but it stipulates that strong inclusion plans will give proposals an edge.

Some advocates have pushed for City Hall and Governor Baker to follow the lead of Massport and adopt diversity components with real consequences.

In Boston's nonprofit world, The Hyams Foundation started with itself. The organization works to improve racial, social, and economic justice in low-income neighborhoods. But until 15 years ago, the trustees controlling the foundation's $134 million endowment for racial justice were mostly white.

The Hyams Foundation revamped its board of trustees, but it took a decade before they were predominantly people of color. Now the organization asks the same of its grant applicants. Jocelyn V. Sargent, the executive director of the foundation, said it's an important factor in how and who gets funding for their proposals. An applicant won't be automatically disqualified if the organization has little diversity, she said, but the foundation makes it clear that this is a critical factor.

They also give some organizations funds to attend conferences that address diversity issues.

"We made the same request of our grantees as we were doing it ourselves," she said. "It was: This needs to happen."

6. An end to “Yawkey Way”

By Adrian Walker

If there is one defining symbol of the fraught relationship in Boston between race and sports, it is a street sign in the Fenway proclaiming “Yawkey Way.”

Some who care about the city’s future insist: This is a name that has to go.

The street on which Fenway Park sits was renamed for longtime Red Sox owner Thomas Yawkey in 1977, one year after his death. His name has become synonymous with bigotry because of his resistance to integration.

Yawkey was the last Major League owner to bring a black player to his team — Pumpsie Green, in 1959. (Prior to that, he had declined to sign Hall of Famers Jackie Robinson and Willie Mays.)

Of course, Boston is full of reminders of Yawkey's legacy in other spheres of civic life, including an MBTA station, a youth center in Roxbury, and a part of Massachusetts General Hospital. Most are monuments to the Yawkey family's philanthropy, which is about $450 million.

But none carry the symbolic weight of the home of the Red Sox, one of Boston's signature landmarks. Indeed, Fenway Park is the only sports stadium closely linked to such a divisive figure. Streets outside other baseball stadiums are named for such beloved figures as Hank Aaron (Atlanta) and Mays (San Francisco).

Given Yawkey's controversial reputation, the idea of renaming the street has circulated for some time, including in a Globe column that I wrote two years ago. This year, the Red Sox ownership — which has distanced itself from Yawkey's record on race — has announced plans to seek the renaming of Yawkey Way.

The team cannot make the change itself: A city commission and the mayor would have to approve of the change, and the street's other residents would have to be on board. None of those seem to be obstacles. Mayor Walsh has already said he is open to a change. The official process is on hold for now, as the Red Sox decide what exactly they want to ask for.

What should be the new name of Yawkey Way?

Red Sox principal owner (and Boston Globe publisher) John W. Henry floated the idea of naming it for retired Sox slugger David Ortiz. But a

street and a footbridge have already been named for Ortiz. Ted Williams, the greatest player in franchise history, has already been honored with the Ted Williams Tunnel.

An online petition has called for renaming the street for Pumpsie Green. That might be a stretch, given Green's relatively brief four seasons with the team.

There is some support for simply discarding the idea of making any kind of political statement with a renaming. Before being renamed, Yawkey Way was part of Jersey Street; that designation could simply be restored.

7. Have the courage to speak up — especially when it's hard

By Nicole Dungca

Not all solutions relate to politics or policies. Some are personal.

For instance, at the family dinner table, your grandmother tries to compliment a black friend, saying he's "not like those other people." A friend tells an Asian cashier that her English is so good, even though her accent makes it clear she was born here.

Psychologists call these subtle, discriminatory comments "microaggressions" — and they're all too common in many schools and workplaces.

And they say everyone should initiate difficult conversations about these racially charged remarks to prevent them.

The term microaggression was coined in the 1970s by Chester M. Pierce, a psychiatrist and Harvard University professor. As its use has become increasingly common, some critics have even regarded the concept as a sign of political correctness run amok.

But psychologists, such as Derald Wing Sue, a Columbia University psychology professor who helped revive its use with a widely read paper, say microaggressions insult people of color.

Literature on how to have conversations about race have proliferated in recent years.

The talks are never easy, experts warn. “It’s very difficult to try and convince the other person that they have engaged in offensive behavior because what they’re going to say is, ‘That wasn’t my intent . . . You’re overly sensitive or paranoid,’ ” Sue said.

Kenneth Sole, who uses his education in psychology to train organizations on group dynamics, said it’s helpful to make sure you’re not labeling one another as “good” or “bad” during such conversations.

Different situations call for different strategies, said William A. Smith, a University of Utah professor who has studied microaggressions extensively. Sometimes, in extreme circumstances in a work environment, you might want to bring the issue to the attention of a supervisor.

If you do approach someone about an offensive statement, there are ways to lower someone’s defenses, Sue said, such as saying that you have been guilty of such microaggressions too.

Sue recommends distinguishing between the speaker’s intentions and how the remark actually made someone feel. That could mean saying, “I know you meant well, but that comment could be taken the wrong way.”

Other times, you can try to halt the offending remark as it’s happening. If someone is in the middle of an offensive conversation, you could tell that person you don’t want to hear the punch line to a racist joke, or say “That’s hurtful,” Sue said.

Whatever the situation, experts say that it’s crucial that people address such issues head-on.

“We can’t continue to sit on our hands with our mouths silent,” Smith

said.

8. We don’t want the last word

Please write to race@globe.com with your thoughts or submit your ideas below.

We look forward to publishing a selection of them in the days ahead.

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or

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