P4HE Workshops – Approaches for Health Equity:
Design Thinking for Design Justice

PARTNERS for **ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY**

How to Use this Resource
This resource provides background on Design Thinking for Design Justice as an approach to Health Equity.

For more context on DTDJ
To get the most out of this resource, P4HE recommends reviewing the level setting resources participants were provided during this workshop sprint. For ways to use Design Thinking for Design Justice (DTDJ) see *Moving to Action: Design Thinking for Design Justice*.

Level Setting
New to DTDJ? Below are level setting resources recommended by the workshop facilitator.

Read
> Introduction to Design Justice
> "Living Freedom through the Maroon Landscape"
> "Refusing Unlivable Destinies"
> "New Orleans artists trained as health workers to combat 25-year life expectancy gap in Black communities"
> "Q&A with Nupur Chaudhury of Dark Matter University"
> "Black Future Heritage Spaces"

Listen
> The Move Podcast, episode: "Human Centered Border Wall",
> TriPod podcast, episode "More than a Runaway: Maroons in Louisiana",

Watch
> Justice in Public Health: Design Justice
> "Dead in the Water: A New Origins Story for Public Health"
> "Designing Futures for Health and Justice"

Workshop Focus
The Partners for Advancing Health Equity Collaborative hosted a three-series workshop sprint on Design Thinking for Design Justice (DTDJ), led by Chris Daemmrich.

> **Session 1:** "Unjust By Design" introduced the concepts of Design Thinking and Design Justice.

> **Session 2:** "In the Swamp" discussed the roots of DTDJ, providing examples of contexts that inform unjust systems, and questions for defining problems ideating solutions.

> **Session 3:** "Preferable Futures," outlined the concept of preferable futures and the design thinking practice of speculative design, through real-life examples.

What is Design Thinking?
Design thinking incorporates innovative problem-solving methods that can help one to identify and assess problems and examine the unjust systems that perpetuate such issues. Design thinking utilizes future thinking problem-definition techniques that have us imagine preferable futures and ideating about how to get there.

What is Design Justice?

Design justice is a set of practices for collective transformation of an unjust and inequitable status quo grounded in principles of self-determination and sustainability. It involves practices aimed to transform unjust systems by recognizing and seeking to rectify the harmful effects of social, environmental, and political histories and power imbalances that produced the unjust systems. Design Justice frameworks include:

> - Design Justice Network's Framework and Principles
> - BlackSpace Manifesto

> Systemic Context

Design Justice prioritizes ongoing learning about both historical injustice and movements for collective liberation while recognizing identities, privileges, protections, power, and access to resources. In the United States, in 2024, our systems and our designed environment have been designed to privilege, protect, empower, and enrich people with the following positionalities:

> - White, European-descended, Male, Straight, Cisgender, Christian, Wealthy, Nondisabled, Neurotypical, English-speaking, American citizen, Adult, Car owner

While the same systems and our designed environment disempower, exclude, harm, and deprive people with the following positionalities:

> - Black, Indigenous, People of color [Asian, Latine, Pacific Islander…], Female, Nonbinary, Gender nonconforming, LGBTQIA+, Muslim, Middle-class and poor, Disabled, Neurodivergent, Spanish-speaking, Vietnamese-speaking, Immigrant and refugee, Child, Carless

> Historical Context

Flint Goodridge Hospital is an example of historical context that informs design justice. Flint Goodridge Hospital was a Black community hospital in New Orleans during the Jim Crow era. The hospital closed in 1982, around the time that integration caused Black hospitals to close. This is an example of unjust removal of a significant institution for Black communities and erasure of history.

What is Design Thinking for Design Justice (DTDJ)?

Design thinking and Design Justice help us to recognize unjust systems and require us to consider the contexts that create unjust systems. Design thinking for design justice is rooted in recognition of historical injustice and inequity, and in the efforts of people who have fought for justice, equity, and liberation throughout history. DTDJ combines Design Thinking in pursuit of Design Justice to inform ways to address systemic issues that disproportionately drive inequities for historically marginalized populations. Various design thinking frameworks and historical contexts of people, places, and

events can help guide our work toward equitable solutions that allow communities to lead prosperous and just (or "preferable") futures.

> ### What are "Preferable futures"?

"Preferable futures" are the futures that our ancestors have sought, despite challenging status quos of inequity and injustice, and the conditions we seek to create through our work for justice and equity today. Speculative design is a form of design thinking that asks questions which drive toward these preferable futures.

How can I use DTDJ?

DTDJ can help us to advance equity given that we reimagine the conditions needed to reach preferable futures and inform action steps to make change. DTDJ can be used to design these futures and to address questions such as:

› What are the implications of unjust systems design for health equity and how might we define and address these issues?

DTDJ frameworks can be used to explore present-day and historical activists, contexts, and systems such as:

- The first black medical practitioners, Dr. James Durham, Dr. Louis Charles Roudanez, and Marie Laveau,
- A prominent activist, Oretha Castle Haley
- Exploring slave ships as origins of public health.
- Segregation in hospitals limiting access to care.
- Exploring Drapetonmania as a way to understand the treatment of enslaved peoples.
- Medical experimentation on enslaved and free Black people.

- Corpse theft of deceased Black people for a supply of bodies in hospitals.
- Freedom House Ambulance Service as a way to support employment opportunities.
- Mapping Black Ecologies as a way to collect narratives.
- "Georgia...Bush", a song that shares inequities perpetuated by Hurricane Katrina.
- The 15 White Coats, a Black physician-led group of change makers.

To learn more about these issues, or Partners for Health Equity's calls to action, a resource library including a full recording of this, and all previous P4HE Workshops, can be found on the P4HE website.

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