

# *Equity for All Arizonans*

## **PRESCOTT COLLEGE COMMUNITY TOWN HALL**

### **October 2, 2023 – Online via Zoom**

#### **DEFINING EQUITY AND ITS IMPACT**

Equality means everyone gets the same thing. Equity means everyone gets what they need to succeed.

The graphic of three people looking over the fence, standing on boxes of sufficient size to enable each to see, illustrates the concept of equity. Equity lies in providing boxes of appropriate size and height to those who need them to see over the fence.

One example of how equity has played out in peoples' professional lives is actors of color. For many years, the only roles available to such actors were roles that called for typecasting of a person of color. More recently, roles of all types have become available to actors of all types. Actors of color can be cast as leading characters without regard to their race.

#### **OPTIMIZING EVERYONE'S POTENTIAL AND IMPROVING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EQUITABLE APPROACHES**

The greatest opportunity to improve equity is by addressing the most inequitable situations. An example is the conditions on the Navajo Nation, where many people do not have running water or utilities, and many more people died from COVID-19 as a result.

Basic human needs essential for survival should be met first for everyone. Education is a close second priority because of its potential to empower people. For example, teaching students of color about their ancestors, their cultures, and their heritage has been correlated with a higher graduation rate.

The concept of equity is layered with the concept of privilege. We live in a society where various privileges and opportunities flow from wealth and power, contributing to inequity. For example, snowbirds and wealthy people may own several homes that they occupy only part time, contributing to the shortage of affordable housing and homelessness. People in power, who are usually privileged, may not want to give up their power and privilege, and thus may oppose measures to increase equity.

Optimizing equity is a complex and nuanced issue that requires weighing and balancing privileges and powers. There are multiple complex systems in place that tend to perpetuate inequities and serve the interests of the powerful. Education can be a powerful tool, both in empowering those who suffer inequities and increasing understanding about the intersectionality of the issues, such as benefits from being on indigenous lands and from institutions founded on slavery. Even our identities are intersectional. None of us is reducible to a single category—we may be oppressed in one circumstance and privileged in another. We should note that inequity is not limited to race and wealth. It also extends to gender and sexual identity.

#### **NEXT STEPS AND ACTIONS**

We recommend that the following actions be taken:

1. The Arizona Department of Education should be directed and empowered to educate people about inequity.

2. Prescott should hold a Town Hall event to discuss the affordable housing shortage and help people understand the consequences of their actions, such as the relationship between Airbnbs and the reduction in availability of student housing.
3. Similarly, there should be greater awareness of our colonial history and its impacts to indigenous peoples.
4. Utilities and communities should collaborate to identify areas that lack essential utilities.
5. There should be more and better public transportation in rural areas.
6. Individuals concerned about equity issues should collaborate with other organizations to maximize their impact.

### **INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS TO ACTION**

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Prescott College Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

#### ***I WILL...***

- Commit to educating those around me and helping to bring more awareness within my own community about these subjects.
- Take steps to learn about the Indigenous communities and histories of the land I live on, wherever I go in North and South America.
- Commit to nourishing my community and beyond through love, food, and dialogue.
- Try to be more upfront with people in what I need for my education.
- Commit to learning the specific colonial and indigenous history of the state so I may better understand my part in this story.
- Become more active in local organizing and see how I can participate more in my community, ex by going to school board meetings, etc.
- Continue to volunteer at The Coalition for Compassion and Justice (CCJ) in Prescott and reach out more there, getting a better understanding of people's experience and perspective who are homeless in Prescott and surrounding areas.