

About OpenSource: Our Team

OpenSource Leadership Strategies, Inc. is a North Carolina-based national consulting practice that amplifies the work of social justice groups as both units and agents of structural change. Founded in 2003 by Gita Gulati-Partee who remains its Chief Strategist, we have worked with more than 100 client-partners across the country and globe. The OpenSource team researches, designs, and evaluates racial and social justice efforts, as well as builds the capacity of organizations, movements, and leaders to advance racial and social justice. Our team is intentionally diverse by race and ethnicity, class background, gender and sexual identity, spiritual tradition, professional field/discipline, and language proficiency. OpenSource is a woman of color-owned company. You can find out more by visiting www.opensourceleadership.com.

KATHLEEN E. CRABBS is a Leadership Educator and Coach and Associate with OpenSource Leadership Strategies. Her work is dedicated to helping people hear themselves and each other more clearly and to move through the world with clarity of purpose and commitment to contributing to justice. For 18 years she was Lead Faculty and Coach with the William C. Friday Fellowship for Human Relations, where she co-designed and facilitated the two-year cohort leadership program and provided one-on-one coaching to diverse adults on developing leadership that is increasingly authentic, mindful and responsible. Prior to moving to North Carolina in 1998, Kathleen worked with NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science in the Washington, D.C. area, where she managed and developed experiential education programs that explored various aspects of human interaction, including multiculturalism, conflict resolution, organization development, leadership development and more. Kathleen has complemented her professional interests in human relations with volunteer service as a mediator for the Orange County Dispute Settlement Center, mediating divorce, partnership and custody cases. She also served for many years on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Women's Center in Chapel Hill. Kathleen holds a BA in English from Randolph-Macon College and a MA in English, with a concentration in teaching writing and literature, from George Mason University. Kathleen lives in Hillsborough, North Carolina with her children Eliza and Henry.

STERLING E. FREEMAN is a native of Little Rock, Arkansas. He currently resides in Durham, NC with his wife Michelle Graham-Freeman and daughter, Joia. He served, 2010-2015, as the Pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church, Smithfield, NC and has been a Christian minister since 1996. Sterling is the project director for the African American Denominational House at Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY, an effort to promote peace and social justice in the world. Sterling is also an associate with Auburn Seminary where he does social justice training with leaders of moral courage. And, he is a co-leader of a Scriptural Reasoning project in his hometown of Durham. The aim is to catalyze interfaith collaboration to work across religious differences. For the past thirteen years Sterling has trained leaders across the state of North Carolina in the area of human relations. He is the former Executive Director of Wildacres Leadership Initiative (WLI), which operates a two-year leadership program called the William C. Friday Fellowship for Human Relations. Sterling holds a Master of Divinity from the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, a BA in Economics from Davidson College and certificates in business strategy and economics from the London School of Economics. He is currently pursuing his Doctor of Ministry Degree in Global Leadership at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University, Richmond, VA.

About OpenSource: Our Approach

As consultants and facilitators, we believe in **interactive processes that emphasize dialogue**

and co-learning. We use a mix of modalities that meet diverse learning needs and draw out the diverse wisdom within a group to create unique, productive, and practical learning experiences.

We offer ourselves as active **facilitator-partners**, which means we are not “neutral” (and actually question whether anyone is ever truly neutral), but rather we bring, with transparency, a point of view, specific frameworks, and a critical analysis alongside deep respect for the wisdom within the group.

In our training with you, we will **focus explicitly on race and racial equity**. To be sure, poverty and economic inequality are at the root of many of the issues that your organization addresses. We believe that **understanding structural racism and advancing racial equity are key to understanding and effectively addressing poverty and inequality in all its forms.**

We are firm believers that there is no “hierarchy of oppression.” Racial equity alone, without concern for the marginalization of people with disabilities, for example, would not satisfy our vision of justice. Indeed, structural racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, classism, and all other systems of inequity depend on and reinforce each other. However, we also believe that, given the **unique relationship between race and our U.S. context**, we must focus on race **explicitly** in order to make true and lasting progress toward justice and strengthen our communities overall.

There are many approaches to equity and leadership, and, when well executed, all can contribute to learning and progress. Here are some of the core beliefs that ground the OpenSource approach:

- Race is a **social and political construct**, not a biological reality. Nonetheless, racism has very real impact on all of our lives.
- Racism (and indeed, all the “isms,” like sexism, ableism, etc.) operates not only at the personal level, but perhaps more importantly it has been **structured into our communities and institutions** systematically over hundreds of years and continuing today. This means that inequity persists even if individual feelings and behaviors change for the better. Thus, we must address inequity structurally, not just personally.
- Structural racism interrupts the relationship between individual efforts and results, creating **inequitable access, opportunities, and outcomes** solely on the basis of racial identity. Personal responsibility and effort matter, but alone cannot overcome structural barriers.
- Racial inequities grow both from the **accumulated under-advantages** directed to people of color (as a class) and from the **accumulated over-advantages** directed to white people (as a class) because of racial identity. Thus, both structural disadvantage and structural privilege must be dismantled for true fairness to take root.
- **Structural racism harms everyone**, even as it strategically doles out privileges to white people (as a class). Racial equity is good for everyone, even those who have received some benefits from an unfair system.
- Achieving racial equity requires an honest examination of **how structural racism operates** and intentionally building the skill and will to close gaps and improve outcomes for all.

To be sure, some of these concepts will be new or challenging to some of you. Our goal is to provide tools and resources that will **provoke new learning and thinking for everyone**, while also creating a supportive environment for you to “try on” some new ideas.

Please be in touch with any thoughts or questions that you have. We are looking forward to working with you.

In solidarity,

Kathleen E. Crabbs (kathleen@opensourceleadership.com, 919.923.0932)
Sterling E. Freeman (sterling@opensourceleadership.com, 919.819.0910)