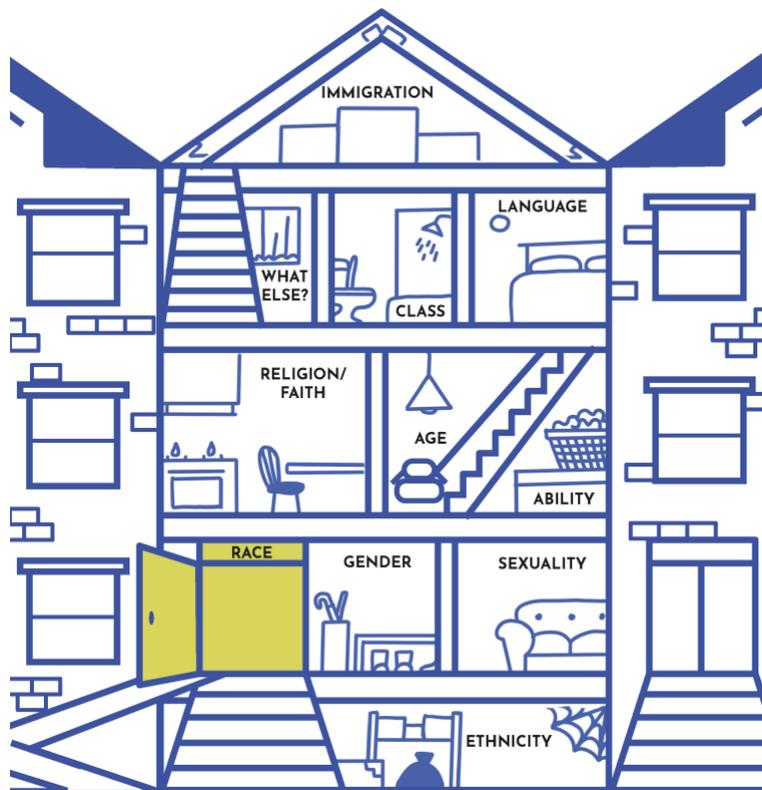


Embodied Identity House

The Embodied Identity House is a model we developed and use throughout our practice. It helps us build a shared understanding of how core parts of our identity shape how we experience our lives.

Our company, Team Dynamics, commissioned this graphic from illustrator Cori Nakamura Lin after we got inspired at a 2016 conference in Atlanta.¹ Building upon the decades-long conversation about intersectionality, a term coined in 1989 by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, we wanted to paint a clear picture of the myriad ways in which our human differences make a difference in our lived experiences.



Each of us lives in a “house” such as the one shown here.

However each of us envisions this identity house—apartment, house, dorm, temporary shelter of all sorts, and so on—all of these rooms are **always present**.

Loosely, the nine rooms in our graphic represent core protected classes in America. What does that mean?

It means that **bias, discrimination, prejudice, harassment, and even violence have been perpetrated against people simply because of these facets of their identity.**

The order in which the rooms appear is *not* important and might change in your own vision of the house; the attic is not more or less important than the basement.

¹ In 2016 we attended a meeting of philanthropic leaders in Atlanta to discuss increasing funding to LGBTQ leaders and organizations. Given our southern context, we explored the intersection of racial justice and LGBTQ justice. Our colleague Marcus Walton (now CEO of Grantmakers for Effective Organizations) provided a helpful mental image that spurred the creation of our Embodied Identity House when he said, “When having conversations about equity I don’t need us to live only in a race house, but I do need us to come through a race door.”

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All of these rooms are always present in our house, even when we might feel that we're occupying only one. You can close a door and pull the blinds, but the room is still there, still affecting the overall comfort and function of the whole house. For example:

Alfonso: I am not “just” a millennial. I am a third-generation Mexican American, gay, millennial man.

Trina: I am not “just” a woman. I am a white, queer woman who has changed class in my lifetime and has a hidden disability.

We are not “just” business partners and friends. We are in a meaningful and important financial and vocational relationship **across race, gender, ethnicity, and more.**

You get our points?

1. Each of us is *always* our whole house.
2. In different settings, we feel more or less aware of certain parts of our identity.
3. Facets of our identity experience praise, pride, and pain.

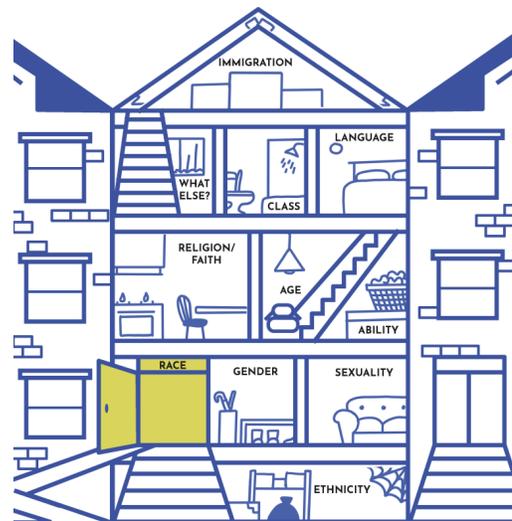
Which parts of our identity are feeling activated or dormant at any one moment depends entirely on our context: who we are around and the ways we are feeling safe and unsafe, valued and ignored.

You will undoubtedly notice that the “race door” is a different color in the graphic. In the United States, **race is currently the difference making the most significant difference** in how people are talked about and treated.

And race, in combination with any of the other rooms in the house, leads to **even worse outcomes for those who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color compared to white people** who share those identities.

For example:

- A white immigrant to the United States has a better experience than an immigrant of color.
- A Black transgender woman is at a higher risk of violence than a white transgender woman.
- A white person with a physical disability gets better care than a disabled Person of Color.



We invite you into the Embodied Identity House to give you a grounding in why the *Hiring Revolution* must be centered in race. Not because race is politically “hot” right now or because it’s “politically correct” to be supportive of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, but instead **because it is both logical and imperative to begin where the most egregious wrongs are being perpetrated. Right now, that’s race.**

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5 MINUTE ACTIVITY →

1) Grab a pen or pencil. Draw a dwelling that reminds you of home. It can be an apartment building, a trailer, your grandma's house—whatever works for you.

-Draw nine rooms and one door. This doesn't have to be an architectural masterpiece, but if a ruler makes you feel better, go for it.

- Label the door "race" and label the nine rooms, with the following: immigration, language, class, religion/faith, age, ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity.

2) In each room and the door, **write down the words you currently use to describe your own sense of each of these identities.**

- Don't fixate on the words you've seen on forms, including the Census. Day to day, how do you actually describe yourself? You can use more than one word, and you are welcome to write in whatever language(s) flows best for you.

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FOR EXAMPLE → Alfonso would currently write, from the top to the bottom of the house:
I am a US-born US citizen; I can only speak English fluently; my current household income is over \$100K;
I have an anxiety disorder and am currently able-bodied; I was born in 1986; I was raised Catholic and
still consider myself Christian; I use the words gay and queer to describe my sexuality; I am a cisgender
man—assigned male at birth, growing up as a boy, and now identifying as a man; my mom is Mexican,
my dad is German; depending on who I'm talking to, I use the words Latino, Latinx, and third-generation
Mexican American to describe my racial identity.

3) As you review the words you just wrote down, **reflect on how you currently feel about those words.** Do you feel close to those words? Far away? Proud? Embarrassed? Unsure? Are some of your identity words currently in flux and you're trying out new ones? Practice noticing your own feelings about your relationship to the various facets of your lived identities.

4) Think about how you've felt at work when participating in hiring efforts in the past (either trying to get hired or doing the hiring). Now circle the three parts of your Embodied Identity House that **were most in your awareness** during that process. Why do you think that was? Which three were you least cognizant of?

5) Lastly, what **impacts and unintended consequences** might you experience when the three identities most present to you are the ones others in your work example thought least about, and vice versa?