



**THE PROXIMITY  
PROJECT**



**Diversity is Not Enough.  
Leaders Need  
Proximity.**

# Introducing The Proximity Project

The Proximity Project helps leaders grow by developing deep, authentic, and enduring ties to the marginalized communities they serve.

We design unique learning experiences that center community voices, increase understanding, and prompt commitment and action for racial justice, equity, and inclusion.



# More than 85 organizations have been represented in The Proximity Project's cohorts



# More than 200 leaders...



# Program Objectives

1. Increase participants' understanding of the needs, expectations, and assets within communities of color in their locality.
2. Increase participants' understanding of the history of racism, systemic oppression and inequality in American society and how it is felt and perpetuated in the healthcare sector and organizations.
3. Build a supportive cross-institutional network of professionals who are committed to racial equity, inclusion, and improved community health outcomes.
4. Increase participating institutions' ability to create inclusive and affirming organizational environments for their staff and equitably serve communities of color.
5. Define individual and institutional actions participants will take to develop and deepen authentic relationships with communities of color.

# How painful is it really?

“In one experiment, people were asked to put their arm in a bucket of water and guess how painful it would be to sit in a freezing room for five hours. When the bucket was filled with ice water, they predicted that sitting in the room would be 14 percent more painful than when the bucket was filled with warm water. But when people made their predictions just ten minutes after removing their arm from the ice water, they made the same estimates as the warm water group. Once the icy water was behind them, even for just minutes, they couldn’t quite fathom what it felt like to be cold.”

**Let's take a quiz!**

**[www.theproximitypro.com/quiz](http://www.theproximitypro.com/quiz)**

# Proximity Quiz questions...

1. Do you live in an area where 50% or more of your neighbors are people of color?
2. Are you regularly present in any places that are predominantly attended by people of color?
3. Do you volunteer regularly with any grassroots organizations that serve communities of color?
4. Do you connect (e.g. for a meal or activity) regularly and deeply with folks (not just one or two!) who do not share your same race or socioeconomic status?
5. Do you connect regularly and deeply with people of color (not just one or two!) who are beneficiaries/consumers of your work?

# Proximity Quiz questions... (cont'd)

6. Do you regularly attend any community meetings or events (in-person or virtual) that center the needs of communities of color?
7. Do you regularly patronize people of color-owned businesses for your variety of personal needs, events, activities?
8. Do you regularly listen to, watch, or read any media sources that center communities of color?
9. Do you have trusted advisors or personal mentors who are people of color?

# Proximity builds empathy and connection

“So I'm not sure if I've cried so much in front of strangers before but that ability to be vulnerable was just really helpful, and as a therapist I've been with lots of people who've been crying and expect that vulnerability. So it was really great to sort of have the opportunity to do that myself with such a wonderful group of people.”

# Proximity deepens understanding

"I thought I understood a lot about racism in the United States and I came up so short. And this Proximity Project really was just so enlightening and fulfilling it's like it's like manna, it's like food, I need it now and I cannot go without it.... the desire to make changes, big or small, but just make change is so strong and the want to carry this work, not only in healthcare, but in my board work and in my community."

# Proximity builds partnerships

"It turned into this really amazing conversation with complete strangers about what are the challenges they have in their community around health and how can Highmark or how can Denée be more helpful and be more attentive"

- Denée Crumrine; Corporate Communications Manager; Highmark Health



# Proximity improves practice

“In almost every patient or family interaction that I have now, this proximity is somewhere on my mind. So I'm constantly asking myself questions like: ‘am I present right now?’ ‘Am I listening, understanding?’ My days have just been so much busier..why aren't I as productive? But I am productive. It's because I'm probably making more of a difference. I'm spending that extra time.”

# Proximity creates urgency and empowerment

"I was actually self reflecting and I think the one thing that I realized as a part of this cohort is that just because I'm black does not mean I know racism. Your experience is different than your knowledge. I think this cohort has really given me more knowledge about what I'm experiencing so I can articulate my feelings better and have more impact from that perspective....The information that you've provided has actually given me more empowerment to communicate what I'm seeing and feeling."

# Let's get proximate!

**Practice vulnerability**

**Recognize history and harm**

**Mind your culture**

**Understand diverse needs and expectations**

**Get out and connect**

**Build structures for sustainable proximity**

What questions do  
you have?

# Call to action...

- Join an upcoming cohort
- Share our Proximity Quiz - [theproximitypro.com/quiz](https://theproximitypro.com/quiz)
- Reach out to discuss - [atnre@theproximitypro.com](mailto:atnre@theproximitypro.com)

**[www.theproximitypro.com/healthcare](https://www.theproximitypro.com/healthcare)**