



# Critical Race Spatial Lens for Equity and Inclusion in College Planning and Campus Space

## Background

In November 2014, Portland Community College's (PCC) Board of Directors adopted a strategic plan to use critical race theory (CRT) as an approach to examine and dismantle systems of inequity.

<https://www.pcc.edu/about/administration/strategic-plan/diversity/>

Since then PCC educators and leaders have developed several CRT praxis-oriented projects to further equity, inclusion, and institutional change. <https://guides.pcc.edu/c.php?g=772356&p=5540387>

In September 2017, PCC's Office of Planning and Capital Construction issued a request for proposals for a new CRT initiative: *CRT in Institutional Facilities Planning*. While working on her dissertation research on applied CRT at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro and serving as a CRT trainer for the college, Amara H. Pérez submitted a proposal that was accepted. This initiative also became the focus of her dissertation study.

## Approach

Through a multifaceted approach, Pérez introduced CRT as an equity tool for planning and design with a broad range of stakeholders, students, and partners. In designing the project she brought forward two key strategies: CRT with spatial theory as an integrated lens and a student participatory action research project called, *Space Matters*, created to recruit, train, and support a cohort of 25 students of color to serve as collaborators and co-researchers. This collaborative work served to inform a set of new practices at PCC including architecture selection processes, community engagement strategies, and inclusive design methods.

## Theoretical and Praxis-Oriented Framework

Drawing from critical race scholars -- (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; and Vélez & Solórzano, 2017) and spatial theorists (Lefebvre, 1991; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000; Costello, 2001; Delaney, 2002; van Ingen & Halas, 2006; Price, 2010; Soja, 2010; Friedman, & van Ingen, 2011; Tuhiwai Smith, 2013; Samura, 2016) - Pérez developed a model for student engagement and an integrated theoretical framework as a socio-spatial approach to equity and inclusion.

Developing a "working" definition of space and a set of 6 praxis-oriented tenets, Pérez presented a critical race spatial lens to expose, examine, and transform the ways in which college planning and campus design function to reproduce racial inequities and the status quo in education.

### Space as:

- Material objects, spatial arrangements, & built environments
- Cultural artifact
- Ideology
- Mechanism of social reproduction

## 6 Praxis-Oriented Tenets of a Critical Race Spatial Lens for Planning and Design:

- Identity, positionality, and lived experience shape our perceptions of space
- Racism is embedded and engrained in all aspects of society, including institutional planning, design, and space
- Dominant narratives in planning and design conceal institutional racism
- College space is not neutral; it is racialized
- Voice, experiential knowledge, stories of students of color as socio-spatial counter-narratives
- Working to dismantle racism in planning and design advances equity, inclusion, and social justice in education