

The Lived Experiences of Our Community: Stories & Data from Needham, MA

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Submitted by
The Lived Experiences Project, Needham, MA



Acknowledgments

The Lived Experiences Project (LEP) would like to gratefully acknowledge the time and emotional effort invested by **every LEP survey respondent** to date. Thank you for entrusting us with your stories, but also for exhibiting courage and resilience, and for speaking up to make our town a place of belonging and equity. We hear you. We see you.

Additionally, LEP would like to thank the **Needham High School alumni network** for offering their survey data for inclusion in this analysis. LEP is also grateful to the **Needham Diversity Initiative** and **Equal Justice in Needham** for their survey respondent outreach, and to **Over Zero**, a nonprofit in Washington DC that works with communities to build resilience to identity-based violence, for its encouragement and support.

This report was conceived, researched and written by local residents of diverse backgrounds and disciplines who wish to see their town become a true home of inclusion and equity. Dr. Nichole Argo served as the report's primary author (and takes full responsibility for any errors within), with support from Sophie Schaffer, who cleaned and organized the survey data, and Lauren Mullady, who helped to produce data visualizations. The report was reviewed by The Lived Experiences Project (LEP) Review Committee, which provided feedback on the write-up as well as earlier input on the survey design input and methodology. The Review Committee includes: Caitryn Lynch (anthropology), Lakshmi Balachandra (economics), Smriti Rao (economics), Rebecca Young (social work), Jenn Scheck-Kahn (writing), Christina Matthews (public health), Beth Pinals (education), and Anna Giraldo-Kerr (inclusive leadership).

The Lived Experiences Project (LEP) is co-led by Anna Giraldo-Kerr and Dr. Nichole Argo.

Executive Summary

After the murder of George Floyd and amidst a growing movement of racial justice protests around the country, local stories of discrimination and bias began to appear on social media, particularly in the Town of Needham Facebook page. These stories were met with a wide range of responses, from empathy and support to defensiveness and outright denial. In an effort to better identify and understand the type and range of bias and discrimination occurring in our town, local citizens created The Lived Experiences Project (LEP) to collect these local stories. The aim of The Lived Experiences Project is to harness the power of storytelling for systemic change.

While the impetus for The Lived Experiences Project is local, it taps into two decades of psychology and public health research which show that individual experiences of bias and discrimination lead to aversive emotions,¹ physiological stress responses,² negative health impacts,³ societal and institutional distrust,⁴ and negative behavioral and educational consequences.⁵ In and of themselves, these outcomes are tragic. Yet the costs do not stop there: The outcomes described above hold implications for institutional and community functioning, local school performance, and municipal budgets (e.g., health costs, education disparities and support).

Results and key findings from the first Lived Experience Project report are described below.

- **This first Lived Experiences Project report draws from ninety-three stories collected via two anonymous surveys between the dates of July 9 - August 31, 2020** (see About the Survey and the Appendix for full details). The method of data collection was online, through social media, so the data reported here are not representative of the entire population of marginalized residents in Needham. Still, this initial data provides a starting point, and can serve as a preliminary “audit of inclusion, equity, and belonging” in Needham.

¹ Brondolo E, Brady N, Thompson S, et al. Perceived racism and negative affect: analyses of trait and state measures of affect in a community sample. *J Soc Clin Psychol*. 2008;27(2):150–173.

² For one example, see Sawyer, Pamela J et al. “Discrimination and the stress response: psychological and physiological consequences of anticipating prejudice in interethnic interactions.” *American journal of public health* vol. 102,5 (2012): 1020-6. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2011.300620

³ For just a few examples, see: Ryan AM, Gee GC, LaFlamme DF. The association between self-reported discrimination, physical health and blood pressure: findings from African Americans, Black immigrants, and Latino immigrants in New Hampshire. *J Health Care Poor Underserved*. 2006;17(2 suppl):116–132; Pascoe EA, Smart Richmond L. Perceived discrimination and health: a meta-analytic review. *Psychol Bull*. 2009;135(4):531–554; Mays VM, Cochran SD, Barnes NW. Race, race-based discrimination, and health outcomes among African Americans. *Annu Rev Psychol*. 2007; 58:201–225; Williams DR, Neighbors HW, Jackson JS. Racial/ethnic discrimination and health: findings from community studies. *Am J Public Health*. 2003;93(2):200–208; Mustillo S, Krieger N, Gunderson EP, Sidney S, McCreath H, Kiefe CI. Self-reported experiences of racial discrimination and Black–White differences in preterm and low-birthweight deliveries: The CARDIA study. *Am J Public Health*. 2004;94(12):2125–2131.

⁴ Adegbenbo AO, Tomar SL, Logan HL. Perception of racism explains the difference between Blacks’ and Whites’ level of healthcare trust. *Ethn Dis*. 2006;16(4):792–798; Benkert R, Peters RM, Clark R, Keves-Foster K. Effects of perceived racism, cultural mistrust and trust in providers on satisfaction with care. *J Natl Med Assoc*. 2006;98(9):1532–1540.

⁵ Inzlicht M, Aronson J, Mendoza-Denton R. On being the target of prejudice: educational implications. : Butera F, Levine J, *Coping With Minority Status: Responses to Exclusion and Inclusion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2009:13–36; Schmdar T, Johns M. Converging evidence that stereotype threat reduces working memory capacity. *J Pers Soc Psychol*. 2003;85(3):440–452.

- **Discrimination appears to be a prevalent lived experience in Needham, pervading multiple domains of everyday life—school, work, consumer experiences, law enforcement, neighborhood dynamics, and social relationships—and suggesting a profound need for redress.**
- **Local discrimination is a function of both social and policy realities, suggesting that any remedy will occur on both of those levels.** Programmatic and procedural mistreatment comprised over half of our current data, and Verbal/Microaggressions one-third. Further, Needham Public Schools were reported as the largest source of lived experiences with discrimination, followed by neighbors and law enforcement.
- **In this sample, racism was the most cited source of mistreatment in Needham (53%).** Discrimination based on culture, nationality or ethnicity came next (21%), followed by gender/identity bias 7% and religion 7%.
- **Local discrimination has caused emotional and mental harm, led to distrust and disengagement, and weakened the social fabric of our community.** Survey respondents reveal feelings of anger, fear, a sense of exclusion and humiliation, mistrust in the community and its institutions—e.g., leadership, Needham Police Department (NPD), Needham Public Schools (NPS)—and disengagement or even a severing of one’s relationship with the town. Residents are angry and disappointed by the failure of their neighbors and institutions to uphold basic human standards of respect and equity.
- **The LEP survey also points to hope and identifies locally sourced aspirations for change.** Exposure to local discrimination has led to increased awareness and empathy for those who experience discrimination. Respondents called for the following types of rectification:
 - Acknowledgment of current and past wrongs and acceptance of the fact that the town needs to change;
 - Investment in efforts to raise awareness and training around inclusion and anti-racism;
 - Policy changes that would include diverse representation in town leadership and at the NPD and NPS, adoption of stronger response policies when hate or discrimination occurs, and proactive structural reforms to increase diversity in the town via more affordable housing initiatives.

Introduction

The LEP survey was designed by a core team of social scientists (e.g., social psychology, anthropology, economics and behavioral economics) with the dual goals of providing anonymity and validation to anyone who chooses to participate, and eliciting a full narrative around local experiences of bias and discrimination (e.g., details of the incident; the recipient's perceptions; its impact on their daily routine and/or physical, emotional, and mental health; and level of engagement with the town and community).

It is critically important to note that these data comprise early findings based on less than two months of data collection. Furthermore, the stories gathered in this first round of data collection came solely from social media outreach (e.g., mostly on Facebook via the Needham, MA page, the Lived Experiences page, and the Racially Diverse Needham page). **For these reasons, these initial data and the report upon which they are based are not representative of Needham's marginalized communities**—at the very least, they do not include participation by those who are not active online, those whom experience a barrier of fear or emotional pain even by anticipating the remembering or telling their story, or those who harbor mistrust for mainstream public initiatives or their ability to render real social change. To obtain participation by these segments of the marginalized town public, a concerted local campaign will need to be created and implemented to engage local Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized groups.

About the Survey

Before taking the LEP survey, respondents are asked: 1) to confirm that they live, study, work, or regularly visit Needham, and 2) that the story they are telling draws on an experience of bias or discrimination *in Needham* due to race, nationality/culture/ethnicity, religion, partisanship, immigration status, gender- or sexual-orientation, disability, age or socioeconomic status, or any other stigmatized identity.

Next, the survey asks respondents whether they are sharing a story on behalf of themselves or someone else, whether they would like it to be kept confidential or, alternatively, if they wish to be called upon to share their story at a public discussion in the future. It then asks respondents to write about the experience that led them to participate (prompting them to include general time, location, who was involved or watching, etc.). After narrating their story, respondents are asked several additional open-ended questions: how the experience made them feel, what they wish would have happened instead, and what, if anything, changed in their lives as a result. After categorizing their story by type of bias or discrimination (e.g., microaggression/verbal, physical, process or program), setting (e.g., school, store/restaurant, law enforcement interaction, neighborhood), and possible motive (e.g., race, religion, nationality/culture, disability, gender- or sexual identity), respondents were asked if they would like to tell an additional story. After completing the story-focused part of the survey, respondents were asked what types of change they would like to see in Needham. They then complete demographic information. For more detailed information, see the full survey questionnaire in Appendix A.

The LEP survey takes at least 10 minutes to complete, though respondents can take as long as they need to complete the form. All survey responses are voluntary; there is no compensation for participation. Finally, the survey is currently only available in English.

In order to protect the identity of respondents and allow them to participate from a space that they deem safe, the LEP survey is being administered anonymously as an online questionnaire. The survey link was made public on July 9, and the data from the LEP stories represented in this report was collected up to August 31, 2020.

How the Survey was Administered

This report is informed by an additional dataset of survey responses collected by alumni of the Needham Public Schools. Simultaneous to the formation of LEP, from July to August, these alumni engaged in an anonymous online survey initiative targeted towards former and current students. After asking respondents to provide their year of graduation and race, respondents were given space to “Describe something that [they] would like to communicate about [their] experience with the Needham Public Schools” as it related to race. Responses often drew upon personal stories, and frequently included ideas for change. The survey was conducted only in English; responses were voluntary and no compensation was offered.

In order to incorporate as many data points as possible in this early report, LEP has included the alumni survey data in its analyses. We did this by merging the story portion of the school dataset and then manually coding the school stories according to key variables in the LEP survey (e.g., type of bias/discrimination, who did it, and whether it was due to race).

Similar to the description of LEP data, above, the alumni school survey is a convenience sample circulated amongst a network of alumni and current students. As such, it cannot provide a full representation of marginalized students or former students. Moreover, by including it in our sample we note that the data upon which this report is based will more heavily represent school- and program-based issues and increase storytelling related to racial bias and discrimination.

Table 1. Comparison of data features in two datasets

	# Respondents	# Stories	Overlap in data
<i>Lived Experiences Data</i>	41	50	Original dataset
<i>School Alumni Survey</i>	39	43	Stories/suggestions for change based on experience or
<i>Combined</i>	80	93	n/a

Who Responded to the Survey

Survey respondents told stories on behalf of individuals aged 4-67 (average age 24). Two-thirds of the stories in this sample were on behalf of oneself. Of the one-third told on behalf of someone else, 18 of those were told on behalf of a family member and nine on behalf of friends, strangers, guests or other students.

Data related to gender, religion, education and income were only collected by the LEP dataset. See the table at right for full details.

Respondents came from a broad range of faiths and were highly educated; respondents came from incomes below, at and above the median Needham income of \$141,000 (though most held incomes above it).

Table 2. Participant Characteristics

	Frequency	Percentage
Reporting on behalf of		
<i>Self</i>	62	70%
<i>Other</i>	27	30%
Gender (out of 35 reported)		
<i>Male</i>	5	14%
<i>Female</i>	29	83%
<i>Other</i>	1	3%
Relationship to Needham		
<i>Lived in Needham</i>	46	54%
<i>Study in Needham</i>	39	46%
Race/Ethnicity		
<i>Black</i>	15	19%
<i>East Asian</i>	14	34%
<i>Southeast Asian</i>	3	4%
<i>South Asian</i>	4	5%
<i>LatinX</i>	3	4%
<i>White</i>	39	49%
<i>Other</i>	2	3%
Religion (out of 39 reported)		
<i>Agnostic</i>	3	8%
<i>Atheist</i>	8	21%
<i>Catholic</i>	7	18%
<i>Evangelical Christian</i>	1	3%
<i>Hindu</i>	5	13%
<i>Jewish</i>	8	21%
<i>Other</i>	7	18%
Income (out of 39 reported) Median=\$141,700		
<i>Below median</i>	14	36%
<i>At median</i>	5	13%
<i>Above median</i>	20	51%
Education (out of 38 reported)		
<i>High school + trade/technical</i>	3	8%
<i>Some college</i>	5	13%
<i>College graduate</i>	8	21%
<i>Post-graduate degree</i>	22	58%

Quantitative Data: Understanding the Reported Incidents

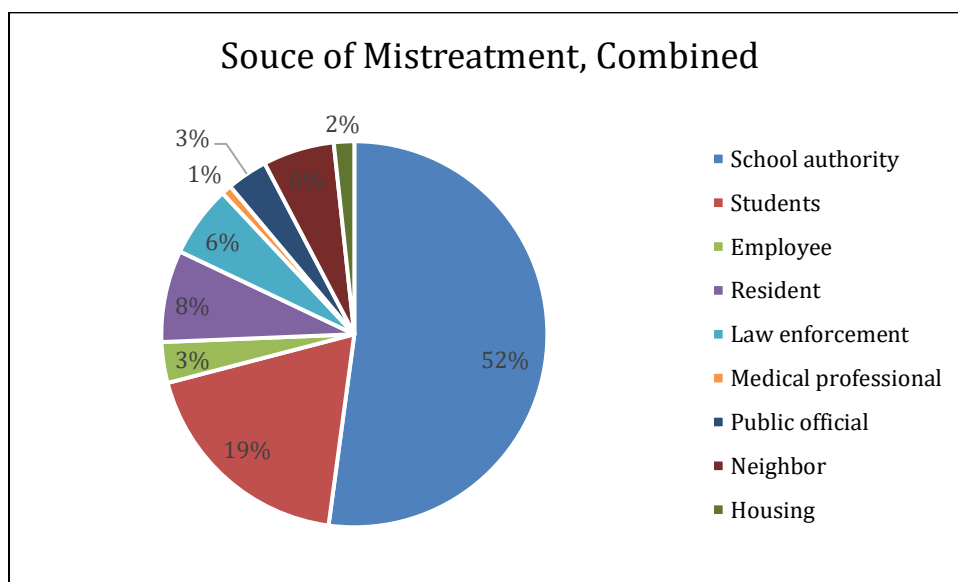
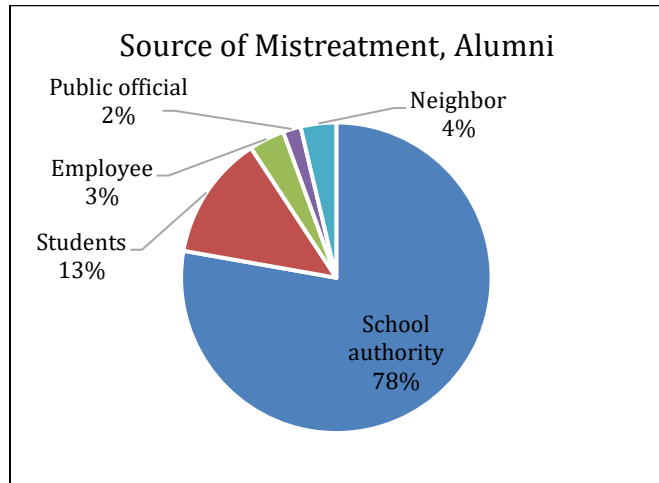
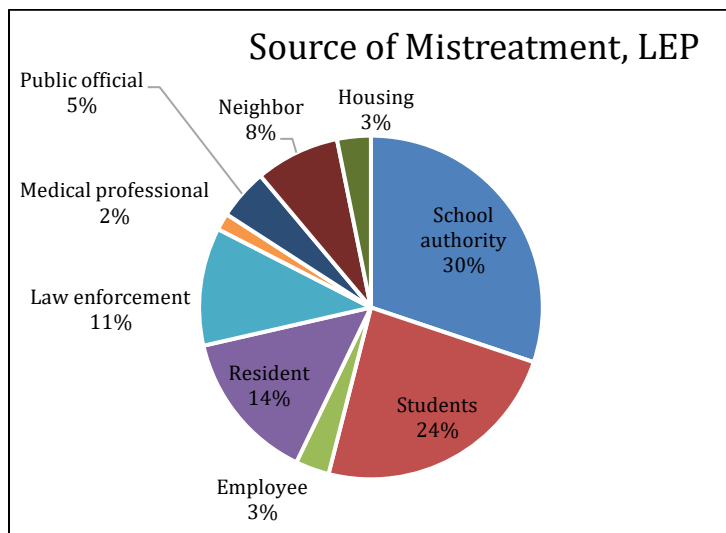
Where are respondents experiencing mistreatment, according to early data?

After writing about their story, the LEP survey asked, “To help us organize the stories that we receive, please tell us which of the following categories best describes **WHO** mistreated you?” Participants were offered the response items listed in Table 2, and they could select more than one option. The breakdown of responses for “Source of Mistreatment” is further illustrated in the pie chart representations below.

Table 3. Frequency of responses to “Source of Mistreatment,” as recorded in two datasets.

	<i>Lived Experiences</i>	<i>Alumni Survey</i>	<i>Combined</i>
School authority	19	42	61
Students	15	7	22
Employee	2	2	4
Resident	9	0	9
Law enforcement	7	0	7
Medical professional	1	0	1
Public official	3	1	4
Neighbor	5	2	7
Housing	2	0	2
Home service provider	0	0	0

It seems critical to note the large role that school experience plays in both datasets. While responses from former students focus almost entirely on experiences stemming from their school careers – either school authorities (78%) or fellow students (13%) – these two categories are also the most frequent source of mistreatment within the LEP dataset as well (at 30% and 24%, respectively). The next three most frequent categories are residents (8%), law enforcement (6%), and neighbors (6%).



What **TYPE** of mistreatment has been identified in Needham, according to early data?

After asking “who” was responsible for the mistreatment they experienced, the LEP survey asked, “Which of the following categories best describes the **type** of mistreatment you experienced?”

Participants could select more than one option, and were given the following response items:

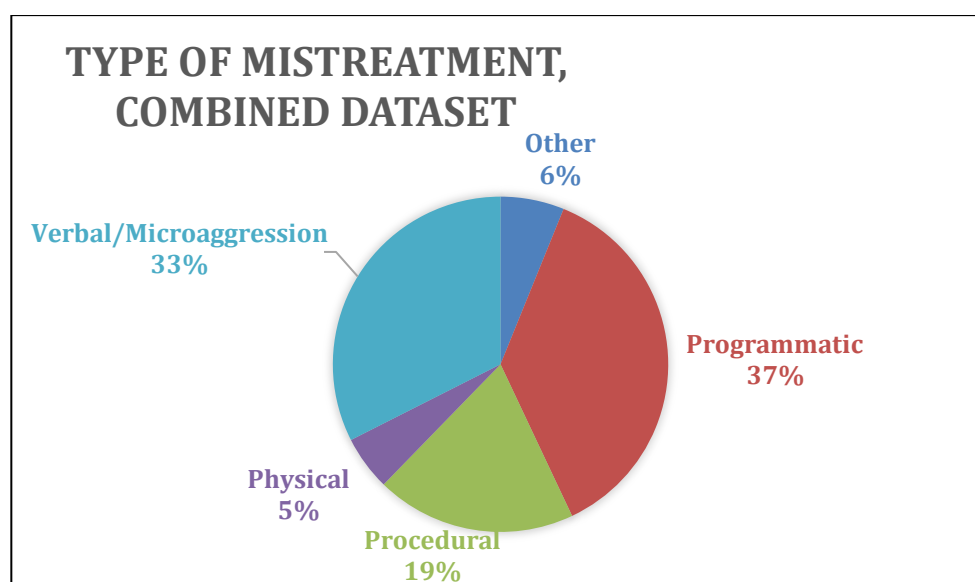
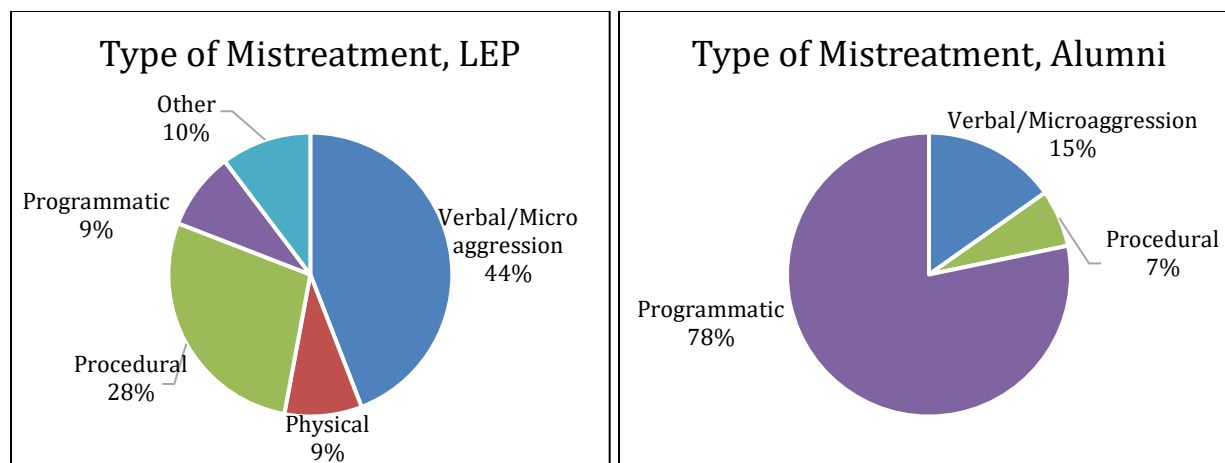
- Verbal/Microaggression (e.g., name-calling, verbal abuse or attacks)
- Physical (e.g., being chased, pushed, hit)
- Procedural, or process related (e.g., being overlooked or un-prioritized in an application process, being targeted or profiled as a law breaker)
- Programmatic (e.g., lacking information about or access to programs, being offered programs with lesser value), or
- Other (respondents could fill in the blank to describe their mistreatment).

The breakdown of responses for “Types of Mistreatment” can be found in Table 3 and is further illustrated in the pie chart representations below. The Lived Experiences and Alumni datasets differ notably; former students largely write about programmatic deficiencies or problematic experiences with school curricula, faculty and staff representation, while LEP responses illustrate a broader range of mistreatment. Within the LEP dataset, which is drawn from the larger Needham community, the category most represented in the stories is Verbal/Microaggressions (44%), followed by Procedural (28%).

In terms of the combined data, two observations are noteworthy: First, the category of Verbal/Microaggressions comprises 32 percent of the data—a substantial minority. Second, procedural and programmatic issues make up 56 percent of all reported experiences. This latter data point underscores that discriminatory experiences in Needham are not just the result of “a few bad apples,” rather they may be endemic to existing policy and program frameworks, which would imply the need for redress at the level of policy.

Table 4. Frequency of responses to “Type of Mistreatment,” as recorded in two datasets.

	Verbal/ Microaggression	Physical	Procedural	Programmatic	Other
<i>Lived Experiences</i>	30	6	19	6	7
<i>School alumni survey</i>	7	0	3	36	0
<i>Combined dataset</i>	37	6	22	42	7



What was the perceived CAUSE of mistreatment in Needham, according to early data?

After asking respondents what type of mistreatment they experienced, the LEP survey asked, “Would you say the type of mistreatment you experienced was due to... ?” Participants could select more than one option, and were asked to select from the following response items:

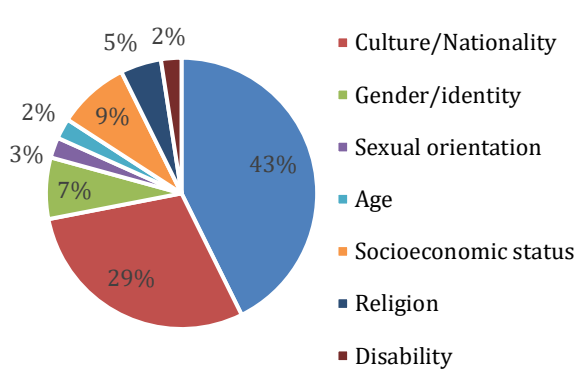
- *Race*
- *Religion*
- *Culture/ethnicity/nationality*
- *Gender or gender identification*
- *Sexual orientation*
- *Age*
- *Disability*
- *Social class*

The breakdown of responses for “Reason for Mistreatment” can be found in Table 3 and is further illustrated in the pie chart representations below it. While the Alumni survey primarily highlights race (68%), LEP responses represent a broader range of perceived prejudices. The top three categories in the LEP dataset are: Race (43%), Culture/Nationality (29%) and socioeconomic status (9%). The most important conclusion to be drawn from these stories is that there are various sources of prejudices perceived to be at play in our community.

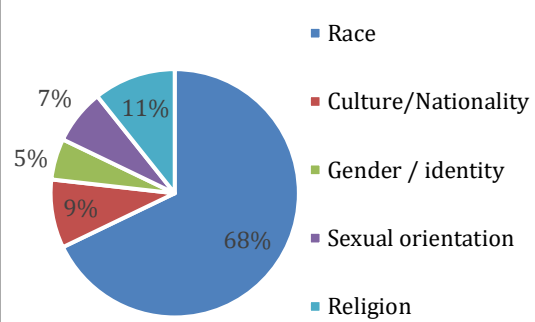
Table 5. Frequency of responses to “Perceived Reason for Mistreatment,” as recorded in two datasets.

	<i>Lived Experiences</i>	<i>Alumni Survey</i>	<i>Combined</i>
Race	35	38	73
Culture/Nationality/Ethnicity	24	5	29
Gender or gender identity	6	3	9
Sexual orientation	2	4	6
Age	2	0	2
Socioeconomic status	7	0	7
Religion	4	6	10
Disability	2	0	2

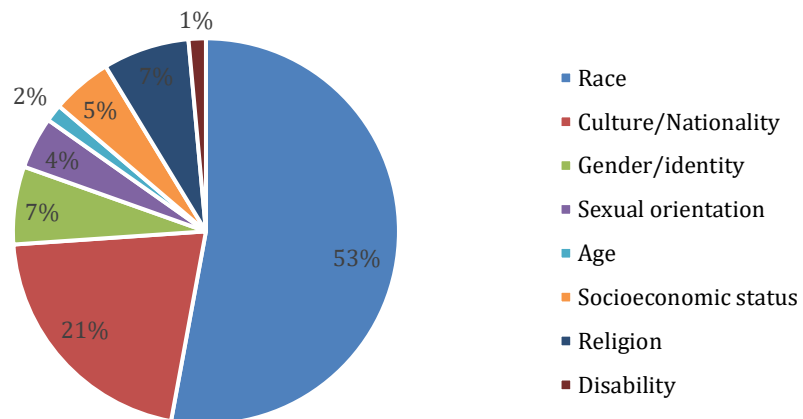
Reason for Mistreatment,
LEP



Reason for Mistreatment,
Alumni



Reason for Mistreatment, Combined



Qualitative Data: How the Incidents Affected Responders in Their Own Words

Understanding Felt Reactions

For the above reasons, and in order to enable readers to better take the perspective of LEP survey respondents, we asked: “How did this experience make you feel?” Responses—which were drawn from the entire dataset (e.g., self and other, all types of mistreatment) ranged from anger to sadness and fear to humiliation and shame to disgust.

For the most part, reactions to respondents' experiences of bias and discrimination were aversive and negative. Respondents expressed a range of emotions, from frustration to disbelief to fear. In addition, many respondents reported feeling empathy for others in their shoes (if they were the recipient of discrimination), or for those whose pain they'd witnessed (if they were telling the story on the behalf of someone else). These responses prompt two observations: First, the personal cost of a lived experience with discrimination is profound. Consider that emotions like shame and humiliation have been deemed the nuclear bomb of emotions given their ability to physiologically shut down the body and its ability perform regularly (cognitively—which has huge implications for learning at school, as well as physically). Likewise, repeated societal responses like anger and fear have physiological, psychological behavioral repercussions. Second, not all responses to bias and discrimination are aversive or overwhelming: alongside reports of sadness and disappointment, experiencing or being proximate to discrimination activated empathy and awareness for those witnessing discriminatory incidents. These positive reactions can be leveraged as the community takes action to repair its social fabric. A word cloud illustrating the most common emotions from the LEP dataset is shown below, followed by some (non-exhaustive and randomly selected) illustrations from the stories.

Figure 1. Word cloud of “How did this experience make you feel?”



→ **Anger**

- “I was angry that this guy was trying to ‘other’ me. My religion and family’s origin had nothing to do with our interaction.” (Microaggression)

→ **Scared in our town**

- “Unsafe and worried. Nothing like this has happened since, but it remains as a reminder that this town is not immune.” (Physical assault)
- “I’m scared for my son I earn him that he needs to be aware and careful not to put himself in situations that will endanger him explain to him that If he is in a group of kids and they get in trouble for doing things because of his skin color he will be the one who gets in the most trouble I want him to understand that he has to be more careful.” (Police, procedure)
- “My kids and I have a very open relationship, and they know right from wrong. I’ve also let them know that if they ever have communication with a police officer they must tell me about it. I know that not all police officers are bad, but it is important that I hear what’s happening with my children because you just never know.” (Police, procedure)
- “I was SCARED.” (School, program)

→ **Shame, Humiliation, Embarrassment, Powerless**

- “Embarrassed. Ashamed, even though I did nothing wrong.” (Verbal)
- “My guests initially felt afraid and then humiliated. My wife and I, as their hosts, were embarrassed and mortified.” (Procedure, police)
- “I felt violated and powerless. All my life I’d been a ‘good kid’ who stayed away from drugs and alcohol and the fact that this officer assumed the worst out of me shattered my worldview. In that moment I learned that no matter how ‘good’ or ‘approachable’ I was that I would always be viewed in a certain way because of my race.” (Procedural, police)
- “It made me feel sick. I couldn’t work for months after because depression settled in. To think if I were white this wouldn’t have happened to me.”

→ **Excluded, or like an outsider**

- “... like an outsider. Like I am not part of the “Needham” community because I obviously came from somewhere else, just because I’m brown.”
- “Excluded and alone.”
- “My overall experience of growing up in Needham molded me into a bitter human with a bleak outlook on how the rest of the world will receive me...I believe that curriculum reform of all public schools, especially in affluent communities, is desperately needed.”
- “It made me feel really bad and horrible - I’ve definitely experienced racism and teasing before, but never on a level where adults and school staff were part of it too. Every time a racist action or microaggression occurs, it reopens the wounds of past racist actions ... and you feel them all again too.” (Verbal)

→ **Empathy for others (Program)**

- “It’s something that I will never forget and hope that my daughter does. Though it still leaves me with a gut-wrenching feeling when I think about it...I do think that we have even more empathy for others who experience discrimination on any level.”
- “It made me aware of how uneven the quality of teaching is at the school. Most teachers there are truly exceptional, but this teacher lacked skills essential for an early ed instructor. The experience raised my awareness...Now I watch the staff for signs of inequity...My kids would never be treated the way the boy was treated. I’m more aware of being a white person and the privilege and responsibility that goes along with that.”
- “It deepened my understanding of what black people put up with on a daily basis and also made me aware that living in a non-diverse town allows that sort of ignorance.”

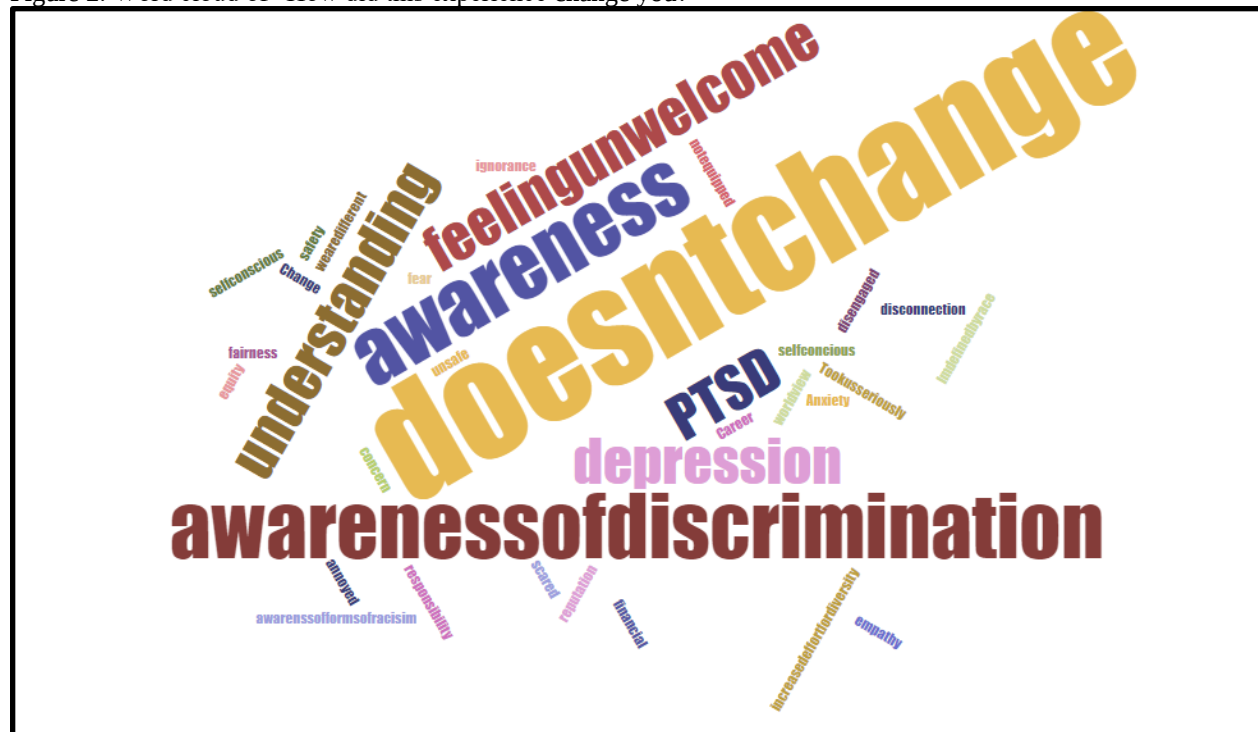
Life Changes Due to Discrimination in Needham

After respondents answered, “How did the experience make you feel?” they were asked another open-ended question: “How did this experience change you, if at all?” Responses—which, again, were drawn from the entire dataset (e.g., self and other, all types of mistreatment)—ranged from a shift in worldview to chronic parental anxiety and distrust in the police, to diagnoses of PTSD, depression or anxiety, to distrust in the town and its residents, to quitting a job, moving out of town, or deciding to never return to Needham.

These responses represent various types of “breaking,” be it with oneself (e.g., PTSD, depression, self-doubt), the local community (e.g., feeling unwelcome, disengagement, distrust, disconnection), and/or local institutions (e.g., town leadership, the Needham Public School system, or Needham policies). In a few instances, individuals reported moving away and never returning.

As noted in the introduction, such experiences cause stress for and between individuals, often leading to unfortunate health and social outcomes, and creating costs and dysfunctions within the local ecosystem. A word cloud illustrating the most common words from the LEP dataset is shown below, followed by some (non-exhaustive and randomly selected) illustrations from the stories.

Figure 2. Word cloud of “How did this experience change you?”



→ **Parental anxiety**

- This experience changed us. I mean we have the conversation with my son daily about how he is different from others and he needs to realize sometimes he will be treated differently. He very much understands that.
- As I stated earlier, this changed my worldview. From that moment onward, I've never truly trusted the police. As a queer black man that would have been hard enough, but now I have the trauma to justify my mistrust.
- "Lol. I now spend \$57,000 a year on my child's high school education. It forever changed us as a family and unfortunately took the innocence of our 6th grade child and made him/her aware that his/her skin caused people to treat him/her differently. It made me mistrust every white person I know."

→ **PTSD, anxiety**

- "Yes. I [now] have severe PTSD that needs treatment with heavy sedatives such as Seroquel and Xanax."

→ **Lack of trust for the town and people in it**

- "I really have a hard time trusting people in town. Like I don't know who's racist and who isn't."
- "I don't trust white people like I used to. I don't hate them. I just feel like they never have my best interests at heart, and you'll find a lot of black people who also think like this."
- "It has made me recognize that an undercurrent of racism often runs through friendships in Needham, and that it can be woven into the fabric of everyday banter in a way that chips away at the self-confidence and sense of belonging that friends would otherwise have."

→ **Unequipped for later life**

- "I can't say growing up in Needham has changed my life. I can't see what my life would be like if I didn't grow up there. I can say that if I felt more accepted by my surrounding community, I would have been better equipped to succeed in life after."

→ **Accepting exclusion, giving up**

- "It's part of the micro aggression that Asian-Americans are always subject too. We are used to it but it still always makes us feel hurt and that we will on some level always be unwelcome in this country, no matter if we were born here, lived here our whole lives, and work in roles that serve the community and our nation."

→ **Uprooting one's self from a bus stop, house or job**

- "We did move bus stops to [redacted], which is an open space. It does still bother me, since the shattered glass could have caused really serious injury, but since nothing else has occurred it has not resulted in any major change to our behavior. I am just left with the sense that not everyone in this town welcomes our presence here."

→ **Disengagement w/ Needham**

- "Neither of our sons has anything to do w/ anyone in Needham. Neither ever attends a class reunion. My husband and I continue to be active in aspects of Needham life that encourage fairness, understanding and equity."
- "I will never work in a doctors' office again. I changed careers entirely. My family had to deal with helping me out due to lost wages and with my depression. My reputation was tarnished because of false accusations from my former employer and coworkers who weren't there."
- "Our African American friends/guests have been very reluctant and concerned about coming to Needham again. We have redoubled our efforts to promote equity and understanding in Needham."

What *Should* Have Happened as a Guide to What *Could* Happen

After writing about their story, respondents were asked: “What do you wish would have happened (e.g., what *should* have happened)?” Responses—which, again, were drawn from the entire dataset (e.g., self and other, all types of mistreatment)—ranged from procedural aspirations (e.g., for law enforcement to rely on probable cause versus racial profiling), to the need for awareness and more respectful behaviors (e.g., “don’t make fun”), to the need to be able to voice one’s experience and perspective, to naming bias and discrimination in real-time (“called out”), to the need for wrong-doers to take responsibility and apologize when bias or discrimination has occurred.

At the core of these responses were calls for *respect*—to be heard, acknowledged and treated with dignity. Be it by making it so that police actions stem from probable cause (rather than profiling), being accountable for interpersonal or social wrongs and making an apology, or by reflecting diversity within the town, all of these aspiration scenarios boil down to repairing a ruptured relationship with marginalized or targeted communities (a majority of which, in this sample, are Black, Indigenous or People of Color—BIPOC).

A word cloud illustrating the most common words from the LEP dataset is shown below, followed by some (non-exhaustive and randomly selected) illustrations from the stories.

Figure 3. Word cloud of responses to “What do you wish had happened?”



→ **Needham Police**

- “The police acknowledging how their action(s) can be seen as intimidating and threatening to people of color living or visiting Needham.”
- “The officers never should have stopped and frisked me without probable cause. Once nothing was found they should have apologized instead of writing down my name as if I had done something wrong.”
- “NPD followed up and engaged in a conversation with me through the Needham Human Rights Committee (NHRC), however, they did not acknowledge how the officer's actions were hurtful and can be seen as offensive. Our hope is that the NPD would have taken this seriously and would have looked into increasing sensitivity and understanding of their officers' to the potential racial and social nuances of their actions.”

→ **Schools**

- “It never should have happened to a child in the first place ... schools need to start educating kids on racism we need to know and study the history of racism so history won't repeat itself.”
- “I don't know anything about legal restrictions, what the principal can say to the teacher or the parent, and I don't know what would have felt right to the parent. As an outsider, it seems an apology from the teacher to the parent would have been a good start. It seemed obvious that the child and teacher were a bad pairing and I think it would have been better for both if he'd been moved to a different class.”
- “In an ideal world, the boy's parents should have been informed of his racist comments and unprovoked physical attack on a classmate. Obviously, the boy heard these comments somewhere! Having both boys sit together on a bench outside the office was embarrassing for our son and did nothing to diminish the racist bullying of the offending student.”

→ **Housing**

- “Policy changes to increase affordable housing- rental and otherwise- for myself and others, to help a more diverse community grow roots and flourish in Needham.”

→ **Town boards, representation**

- “There would have been an aha moment and the board members would have apologized The members made sure that the group nominated members outside of their select race and religion to better reflect the town of Needham's diverse population.”
- “PTC would change its view and composition to reflect more color, educated working moms and dads.”

→ **Microaggressions/Verbal**

- “I wish that the other White boys would have called out the White boy who made the remark in a way that only peers can chastise each other ("not cool, man", or something similar).”
- “It would have been nice to have gotten that outreach from other moms in the playgroups I had joined. And it would've been wonderful for my children.”

Respondents Suggestions for Change in Needham

The last open-ended question on the survey asked respondents the following: “What do you think needs to happen for Needham to become a more welcoming, inclusive and equitable community?”

Responses primarily referenced reform aspirations at the level of town policy, norms and culture, and Needham Public Schools. Calls for change focused on:

- *Acknowledgement* - recognizing that Needham has fallen short when it comes to being an inclusive and equitable town and identifying areas of challenge and the need for change;
- *Awareness, Training, Community Discussions*– investment in inclusion- and anti-racism training for public servants and the community at large, as well as community dialogues and discussions allowing for residents to interact with one another and for residents to engage in sustained dialogue with NPS and NPD around issues of hate incident responses and policing;
- *Policy Change & Norm Signaling* – increase diversity in Town/NPS/NPD representation and leadership/staff; cultivating diversity within Needham by changing housing and affordability policies, and via the METCO system; adopting stronger communication and response policies for hate incidents in the schools and community; finding ways to measure current gaps and future inclusion and reform interventions (e.g., future research, representative surveys, ‘welcoming city’ certification) and to amplify these steps such that Needham signals strong norms of inclusion to its residents and surrounding areas.

In the boxes on the following pages, we categorize the LEP survey responses according to Town policy reform, Norms/Culture, and Schools.

Town/Policy Reform

Acknowledging its challenges

- “Needham needs to accept it has issues to address. Our town is a very expensive community. It's too expensive to encourage racial diversity. We're becoming too homogeneous both racially, ethnically and religiously.”
- “More affordable housing, and not just the 11 percent of square footage needed to consider a building ‘affordable’.”
- “I do believe that Needham is getting more and more diverse but not attracting people of color. Some of it is economics but there must be a way to increase this, maybe through more affordable housing.”
- “Require boards to represent the diversity of Needham.”
- “Housing! People need to be able to BE here first, to live here without worrying about the cost.”
- Residents need to be educated on the Asian experience of the covid pandemic in this country and make strong public statements condemning this behavior.
- “Being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination.” This town needs to stop pretending like everything is fine or else people of color will continuously go through trauma when they live there. ”

Diverse representation

- “More diversity in the population and town leadership.”
- “In the absence of a change of heart on the part of the person who shot that BB gun, which is hard to ensure, I am willing to accept a strengthening of norms around anti-racist behavior in the town, and stronger efforts to signal that we all belong here equally. As a step toward that, the changing demographics of the town need to be better reflected in the town’s leadership, school staff, the police etc.”

Cultivating diversity (through housing, etc.)

- “Ultimately become more racially, culturally, and socio-economically diverse. I know this is a structural and seemingly impossible notion given Needham is very homogenous and there are many factors for why that is, but I do think living in diversity is different than just talking about it.”

Training in anti-racism and inclusion

- “Diversity and Inclusion Programs at town level.”

Signaling inclusion

- “It needs to put more emphasis on diversity inclusion principles in all facets of Needham life including city council, police and school. It seems to me to be a very old fashioned town, quite small in its thinking, but this has to change, to attract and retain younger educated families including families of immigrants, which will likely change the dynamics around school and community... People like me moved here for the school system, and location proximity to Boston, but in order for us to stay and engage, we need to see more voices other than same old existing voices. It has potential as I have seen to change, and I have met some really wonderful people here, but wish that this represented my view and thinking more. I would prefer increased funding in its school, increased funding in its metco program and decrease in emphasis on police and fire, which were old norms for the town.”

Norms/Culture: Anti-racism & Respect

Education/Training

- Societal change is many pronged. Group discussions and action plans resulting are taking place now and that’s a good start, but it’s so much more complicated!
- We need to create a dialogue in our youth that this talk is not acceptable in any manner
- More education at all levels, Schools, Houses of Worship, Businesses, Communities, etc.
- I don’t teach people not to be racists.
- The community needs to protect ALL of its citizens and not dismiss their experiences.

Public discussion

- Greater public discussion about these issues so it will be harder to deny racism exists here.
- More public discussion and town/clergy acts and events focused on inclusion and diversity.
- I think people need to wake up and realize that black people aren't asking y'all to kiss our asses. We just want common respect returned just like we give you. We want to walk down the streets of our neighborhoods without people thinking we're suspicious. We want to be able to walk freely without stares of judgement. That's it!!! We want equality and compassion. This isn't a political discussion. It's a basic human rights convo.
- Provide more opportunities to expose the next generation to different cultures. This forum is a huge leap in the right direction.

Individual change

- We need to teach our children to respect every human beings.
- Children are not born racist. Conversation must start from homes and in schools.
- Everyone needs to look at how they perform these micro aggressions daily.
- If you do not have a diverse group within your friend circle or community, it will be hard to except those who are seen as visible minorities.

Schools / Curriculum

Curriculum

- Incorporating African American studies as normal history curriculum, starting in the second grade.

Diversity in Staff/Faculty

- The school programming on equity and bias needs to extend beyond educating teachers to include educating students and parents. The schools seem to be trying to meet teachers where they are and nudge them toward current concepts of equity and inclusion, but that seems too slow and gentle. If they can't get on board with basic concepts about equity, they shouldn't be here to influence our children.
- Focusing just on race in this answer, I'd say: we need more Black and Brown students and educators in Needham. Our students have nowhere near enough interaction, from a young age, with peers who don't look like them, and the Black and Brown students do not see themselves reflected in the adults around them. This has led to a lack of understanding and empathy, and a casual willingness (I'm talking at the high school level, now) to just ignore "the Metco kids". Furthermore, there is a "s/he must be Metco" label attached to any non-white student in Needham, intended as a dismissive, descriptive shortcut. I have heard my own kids say it, and I am ashamed of them for it. I would like to see a concerted effort to triple or quadruple the number of Metco students Needham hosts, as well as a strategy to attract a strong cohort of Black and Brown teachers. I understand this is an expensive proposition: maybe this is the moment in time, as a Town, to put our tax money behind our stated interest in social justice.

New response policies for hate incidents

- More diversity in teachers and school administrators. More training for teachers and students. Zero tolerance on racial practices and racist comments by students.

Training

- More school and community-wide education.

Conclusion

First, bias and discrimination appear to be prevalent lived experiences in Needham. They pervade multiple domains of everyday life—school, work, consumer experiences, law enforcement, neighborhood dynamics, and social relationships—and suggest a profound need for rectification.

Second, local discrimination is a function of both social and policy realities, suggesting that any remedy needs to occur on both of those levels. Programmatic and procedural mistreatment comprised over half of our current data, and Verbal/Microaggressions one-third. Needham Public Schools were reported as the largest source of lived experiences with discrimination, followed by neighbors and law enforcement. Importantly, racism was the most cited source of mistreatment in Needham, followed by discrimination based on culture, nationality or ethnicity.

Third, discrimination has caused emotional harm—and possibly, if psychology and public health studies are to be invoked, harmful health impacts and behavioral outcomes. These harms have certainly landed on local targets of discrimination: Survey respondents reveal feelings of anger, fear, a sense of exclusion and humiliation, mistrust in the community and its institutions (e.g., leadership, NPD, NPS), and disengagement or even a severing of one’s relationship with the town. Furthermore, witnessing incidents of discrimination has weakened our community’s larger social fabric. The Needham residents who told stories on behalf of friends and family members or as observers expressed disappointment at the failure of their neighbors and institutions to uphold basic human standards of respect and equity.

As difficult as it is to read these stories and make sense of the pain that has been experienced here, these painful experiences have also led to increased awareness and empathy for those who experience discrimination. Respondents called for the following types of address racism and discrimination in Needham: acknowledgment of current and past wrongs and acceptance of the fact that the town needs to change; investment in efforts to raise awareness and training around inclusion and anti-racism; and policy changes that would include diverse representation in town leadership and at the NPD and NPS, adoption of stronger response policies when hate or discrimination occurs, and proactive structural reforms to increase diversity in the town via more affordable housing initiatives. As a community, Needham can leverage this protective impetus and connection to produce systemic and sustainable change.

Limitations and Next Steps

The data summarized in this report were gathered in less than two months and without a concerted outreach campaign. It is possible, in fact, that we have barely scratched the surface of available stories in Needham. For these reasons, readers should keep in mind that these data are not representative of Needham’s marginalized communities and their experiences. Similarly, the themes, typologies, and proportion of bias and discrimination that are reported here may shift as representation of marginalized communities becomes more complete. That said, this report offers useful initial insights by establishing the existence and range of Needham’s locally-specific lived experiences.

Additional research will be necessary in order to identify the prevalence of lived experiences with discrimination in Needham with a sample that is more representative of marginalized populations. We would note that these qualitative findings would usefully inform a representative town-wide survey—a systematic “audit of belonging and equity”—to identify perception gaps relating to discrimination and equity in our town and quantify local support for different types of inclusion initiatives.

APPENDIX A: Survey Instrument

Needham Lived Experiences Questionnaire: Survey Flow

Standard: Intro (1 Question)

Standard: Story 1 (11 Questions)

Branch: New Branch

If

If Thank you for sharing this story with us. Would you like to share another story?

Yes Is Selected

Standard: Story 2 (11 Questions)

Branch: New Branch

If

If Thank you for sharing this story with us. Would you like to share another story? Yes Is Selected

Standard: Demographics 1 (12 Questions)

Standard: Feedback (3 Questions)

Page Break

Start of Block: Intro

Welcome to 'Lived Experiences'!

What are we about? Storytelling for change. We believe that for Needham to be a place of belonging, it must be a place of equity. Lived Experiences collects local stories to document experiences with all forms of racism and identity-based prejudice IN NEEDHAM--from people who live, study, visit, or work in Needham. Our survey is anonymous, and--if you want it to be, confidential--so that anyone who has a story to tell can tell it without fear. Our goal is to draw on the aggregate data from this survey (e.g., numbers reflecting the types of incidents, types of bias/discrimination, locations where such events are occurring, types of reform suggested by respondents, etc.) for a public report that will inform town-wide reflection, discussion and policy-making. The first report will come out in mid-September. Important: Only those stories that respondents have designated as "okay to share publicly" will be included in the report, and potentially shared on other platforms such as the Lived Experiences Facebook page, town webinar discussions, etc. On the other hand, if YOU would like to share your story at a future event, you can--let us know in the survey.

Why should you participate in Lived Experiences? Because stories have the power to transform cultures and power systems, as they have in the #MeToo movement. We know that asking someone who has already had to endure bias and discrimination exacts a further emotional effort from them, but we believe telling one's story is also EMPOWERING. And it creates CHANGE. Your story can help transform our community by re-setting the agenda, triggering much-needed awareness, prompting larger

reflection and dialogue, building new relationships across groups, and shifting norms--from complacency and resignation to responsibility and agency, from hiding and secrecy to inclusion and upstanding.

Who co-leads Lived Experiences? The Lived Experiences Project was created by two Needham residents, Anna Giraldo-Kerr and Nichole Argo. Anna is the founder of Shades of Success, Inc., a leadership development organization that helps leaders across industries foster inclusive and equitable cultures. Dr. Nichole Argo is a social psychologist and the Director of Research at Over Zero, a non-profit that works with communities to build resilience to identity-based division and violence. Before being made public, this survey was reviewed by a racially diverse group of Needham residents with expertise in social psychology, coaching, behavioral economics, social work and anthropology.

To participate, click -->.

Share your story, or a story you witnessed.
You can also tell a story on behalf of someone else.

When you tell your story, we ask that you make all aspects of your story anonymous. If identifiers are given, they will be omitted before we make the final report available to the public.

This form will ask you:

- If the story you are sharing happened to you, or if you are sharing it on behalf of someone else;
- If you'd prefer we keep the story confidential, or if the story you are sharing can go on public record (and if you'd be interested in sharing it in a future forum);
- To write about what happened (where, when, how, etc.);
- How others responded;
- How the experience made you feel, and/or impacted your life;
- How you wish the experience would have played out, and,
- What sort of change you'd like to see in Needham; and,
- Demographic questions.

This questionnaire will take ~10 minutes to complete (depending upon how long it takes to write your story). We will provide question prompts to help you tell your story and you can share up to two stories with each entry.

We invite you to share your experience if you:

- Have experienced or witnessed identity-based mistreatment on the basis of your race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, religion, socio-economic status, (dis)ability, gender, gender-identification, age or sexuality gender; AND
- You are: A Needham resident, or a person who works, goes to school in, spends time in, or often travels through Needham.

End of Block: Intro

Start of Block: Story 1

Thank you for contributing to the Lived Experiences Project!

Are you telling this story on behalf of yourself or someone else (e.g., a child, family member, friend, etc.)

- ☐ Myself
- ☐ Someone else (Please write what your relationship to them is below, e.g., son/daughter, friend, etc.)
-

All stories told here are anonymous, meaning nobody will know your name or the names of others involved. Still, sometimes people worry that the story itself could make them identifiable. For this reason, we are offering to keep some stories confidential (and to store them on a secure server).

How would you like us to use your story?

___ My story can be shared publicly.

___ Please keep my story confidential. Do not share the details of my individual story publicly.

Below, please write about your story. Your story should tell about a local experience with racism and/or prejudice.

As you write, try to include the following information:

- Describe the event. What happened, who was involved (without using names), and in what sequence did the event/s unfold?
- Describe the setting. Where did it happen? (e.g., if in school, in the hallway/classroom/field, etc?)
- When did it happen? (e.g., approximate month, year, day of week, time of day)

Reminder: Do NOT use names when describing yourself, your friends or anyone else in your story.

Did anybody else see what happened, and/or were there bystanders or others involved?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Who were these bystanders (without using names)? How did they react?

Did they do nothing? Did they side with the perpetrator? Did they lend you support or encouragement?

How did this experience make you feel?

How do you wish this experience would have ended? (e.g., In an ideal world, what should have happened?)

Page Break

How has this experience changed you and/or your loved ones (if at all)?

To help us organize the stories that we receive, please tell us which of the following categories best describes **WHO** mistreated you?

Note: You can select more than one option.

- ☐ School authority figure (e.g., teacher, counsellor, coach, etc.)
 - ☐ School students
 - ☐ Store/restaurant employee
 - ☐ Home service provider
 - ☐ Public official
 - ☐ Neighbor
 - ☐ Needham Police or law enforcement
 - ☐ Housing authority
 - ☐ Medical professional
 - ☐ Resident, or member of the public
 - ☐ Other _____
-

Which of the following categories best describes the **TYPE** of mistreatment you experienced?

Again, you can select more than one option.

- ☐ Verbal (e.g., name-calling, verbal abuse or attacks, micro-aggression)
 - ☐ Physical (e.g., being chased, pushed, hit, etc.)
 - ☐ Procedural, or process related (e.g., being overlooked or un-prioritised in an application process, being targeted or profiled as a law breaker, etc.)
 - ☐ Programmatic (e.g., lacking information or access to programs, being offered programs with lesser value)
 - ☐ Other _____
-

Would you say the type of mistreatment you experienced was due to... ?

- ☐ Race
 - ☐ Religion
 - ☐ Culture/nationality/ethnicity
 - ☐ Gender or gender identification
 - ☐ Sexual orientation
 - ☐ Age
 - ☐ Disability
 - ☐ (Social) Class
-

Thank you for sharing this story with us. Would you like to share another story?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

If yes, respondent receives each of the “Story 1” questions again. If no, they continue.

End of Block: Story 1

Start of Block: Demographics 1

We have just a few more questions for you.

What best describes your relationship to Needham?

- ☐ I live here.
- ☐ I work here.
- ☐ I study here.
- ☐ Other (e.g., visiting, commute through Needham, shop here, etc.). *Please write what brings you to Needham:* _____
-

For how long have you lived in Needham?

- ☐ Less than a month
- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years
-

For how long have you been coming to Needham for work?

- ☐ Less than a month
 - ☐ Less than a year
 - ☐ 1-2 years
 - ☐ 2-5 years
 - ☐ More than 5 years
-

For how long have you been coming to Needham to study?

- ☐ Less than a month
 - ☐ Less than a year
 - ☐ 1-2 years
 - ☐ 2-5 years
 - ☐ More than 5 years
-

In your view, what do you think needs to happen for Needham to become a more welcoming, inclusive and equitable community?

What is your age?

▼ 18 ... 99

With what gender do you identify?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ MtF Female
- ☐ FtM Male
- ☐ Genderqueer
- ☐ Other _____

What is your race/ethnicity? *Please select as many as you identify with.*

- ☐ White
 - ☐ Black or African American
 - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
 - ☐ East Asian
 - ☐ South Asian
 - ☐ Southeast Asian
 - ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
 - ☐ Other _____
-

With what religion do you identify?:

☐ Evangelical Christian

☐ Catholic

☐ Muslim

☐ Jewish

☐ Hindu

☐ Buddhist

☐ Mormon

☐ Atheist

☐ Agnostic

☐ Other (please write it in) _____

What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

☐ Some high school or less

☐ High school graduate

☐ Trade or technical school

☐ Some college

☐ College graduate

☐ Post graduate degree

How would you rate your relative household income, as compared to the median Needham income of \$141,690?

- ☐ My household income is lower than the median income.
- ☐ My household income is approximately the same as the median income.
- ☐ My household income is higher than the median income.

End of Block: Demographics 1

Start of Block: Feedback

Earlier in the survey, you said that 'Lived Experiences' can share your story publicly. At some point, we might begin organising public discussions or events meant to encourage recognition and discussion of lived experiences in Needham . Would YOU be interested in sharing your story at a future event? (e.g., a webinar discussion, Facebook live event, etc.)

___ Yes (If so, enter your contact info here: _____)

___ No

You have almost completed the survey!

Is there anything else you'd like to add? Please feel free to share any questions or feedback for us below.

Would you like to get involved with the Lived Experiences Project, or learn about other initiatives working to fight racism in town? If yes, please include your contact information here and we will reach out.

You have completed the survey. Thank you for sharing your story, and being a voice for change in Needham!

We believe this collection of Needham-based lived experiences can be an important part of raising the awareness of our town members and leaders.

Below, we include a list of legal, psychological, and health assistance resources that may be helpful in relation to the story you've shared here.

Massachusetts Attorney General

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/145ERvrv5Ih4Sw5IYjcXpgb9wEYtfQxYll6rUJwabf0/edit>

ACLU - Reporting and Intake

<https://www.aclum.org/en/seeking-legal-help-aclu>

Lawyers for civil rights

<http://lawyersforcivilrights.org/gethelp>

NAACP <http://naacpboston.com/services-2/>

Needham Health and Human Services

<https://www.needhamma.gov/3303/Health-Human-Services>

End of Block: Feedback

APPENDIX B

De-Identified Stories

Verbal or Micro Aggression

1. More of a micro aggression prob done out of ignorance - Had this happen a couple times in Needham where people have asked me “where are you from” and I feel awkward bc I don’t know how to answer it. I know to say “India” but the reality is I Was born in the us and grew up here - in Needham! - so when you have dark skin people still make you feel like an outsider or the “other”
2. We are Indian American. In elementary school and middle school, on numerous occasions, teachers mixed him up with other Indian boys in the class, even after knowing the boys for several months. This is a micro aggression and made him feel like the teacher did not really know him or thought they were all the same. .
3. My wife, son, and I were taking a walk near Needham center and my son saw and heard a car behind us with several young adults shouting “coronavirus” at him as they drive past
4. In 2010, the group [redacted] put on the musical "Thoroughly Modern Millie." It's based on a 1967 film that has several racist scenes involving Asian characters, white actors pretending to be Asian/yellowface, etc. You think the Needham group would have left out or changed those characters and accents, but unfortunately, they went forward with it and seemed to rely on it for cheap laughs. Asian people are mimicked and teased for accents, so mimicking one in the show was really cringey and offensive. I remember the audience bursting out laughing at this "accent," particularly as one student said "Impossibru!" (also mocking the Asian "Impossibru" meme) and I felt absolutely horrible, like I wanted the ground to swallow me up whole. The part about this incident that really bothered me was that this entire play was approved by adults, teachers, parents, and town/school administration. They not only approved the show to go on, but they LAUGHED at it. It feels like they're saying on an institutional level that this type of thing is ok, even comedic. This is not just a kid in class saying something racist (yes, that's happened too), but approved by adult supervision and town institution who apparently did not see anything wrong with it. What does that say to students like myself? What kind of environment does that create for us? Please in the future, do NOT have racist characters and scenes in your play, even if it's written in the original screenplay. Racism is never ok, no matter what time period it's from. Do not try mimicking an accent, wearing another culture's clothing while really, you're making fun of them as they provide "comedic relief," etc. It is racist and offensive. This was 10 years ago, and I've definitely experienced many other things in my life regarding racism, but this particular incident did have an impact on me for how it made me feel. "
5. My husband was picking something up at Needham [redacted] the evening of July 17 and an elderly white woman saw him enter and told him “My stuff is over there. Don’t touch my stuff.” (jacket, some personal belongings at a table) My husband, very confused, replied “Why would I touch your stuff?” To which she rudely reasserted, “Just don’t touch my stuff!” The ironic part is that she was not even wearing a mask!
6. Two years ago I introduced myself to the builder next door to my house. He asked where I am from. My initial gut reaction was he wanted me to tell him that I was Jewish. I told him that I grew up in Boston. He asked where my relatives were from and I answered, “The US” and he said, I don’t mean any harm, I’m Italian.
7. I am an Indian American and am presently a resident of Needham, but the incident that I am about to narrate happened in Jan 2018 when I used to travel via Needham (Rt 135) to Natick.

One afternoon, while returning from work, I had stopped at the traffic light right across from the restaurant [redacted]. While I was waiting at the light, a car rear-ended me. I got down, just trying to grasp the situation. The other driver apologized and asked that we pull over to a parking area so that we don't block the traffic I found it to be reasonable and did that. As soon as I got out, the other driver, who was white but had an eastern European accent, began accusing me of staging an accident and called me a terrorist. He accused me of staging the whole thing. I knew this wasn't going anywhere good, and I happened to see an officer across the street overseeing a construction. So I immediately walked towards him and briefly told him what happened. He immediately spoke on radio and called for some back up. The other officer got there quickly and de-escalated the situation, he asked both of us to remain in our cars while he got an account of what happened. I told him what took place and also mentioned that the other driver, while hitting a stationary car, was calling me a terrorist etc. To which the officer said, ""Yes sir, that person does have a lip, but we do not do that here in Needham."" He seemed to be very friendly and explained in a very professional manner that the damage seemed to be very less and that he cannot write a ticket unless he estimates the damage to be more than \$1000. But I truly appreciated what the officer did that day. The other driver was a resident of Framingham. I have lived in MA for more than 19 years and this was the one time where I was close to being profiled. Although it was disappointing, the Police officer's professionalism truly made me feel safe that afternoon.

8. Back in the spring of 2018, my daughter was playing with her friends at school. One of the girls told my daughter that she couldn't play the game because she was Jewish. My daughter told a teacher (not her primary teacher), who told her to "move on" and did not address the situation. Luckily, another friend stepped up to support my daughter at the time of the incident. When my daughter came home from school, she told me what happened and how nice her friend had been. I texted the friend's mom to thank her for raising someone who would intervene. The mom confirmed that her daughter told her the same story as well. I emailed my daughter's teacher to let her know what happened and to let her know that I was disappointed that a teachable moment was missed. At which point, the girls involved in the incident were brought together to have a discussion. Luckily, the girls were able to move past this and continued to be friends. However, going through this left such a pit in my stomach because it was the first time my daughter questioned her religion - up until that point she was so proud to be Jewish. Further, I was extremely disappointed that had my daughter not told me and had I not emailed the teacher for a response, this would have been swept under the rug, leaving my daughter with less of her identity.
9. My first week of 2nd grade at [elementary school] (Had just moved to Needham that summer), this boy in my class called me the N word. I had to go home to my schizophrenic uncle (God bless him he's a good man but when he's manic, HE'S MANIC) and ask him what the word meant. Let's just say chaos ensued the next day at school when he showed up demanding answers. It was a lot to process at 7 years old.
10. My son had a playdate at a friend's house. It was a nice day and we had time to kill, so we decided to walk. On my way home, a man all of a sudden ran out of his house and started yelling as I was walking by his driveway, ""Why are you so late? My wife told me you would be here 30 minutes ago."" My confused look must have given it away and he was like...Are you the cleaner? where's your stuff? I told him no I'm just walking by. I live a street away. Without an apology, he made an 'ugh' sound and matched back inside mumbling to himself. This took place the summer of 2018.
11. I was at an executive board meeting for a Needham town sports group. We were deciding on where to host the next vote. One member suggested their exclusive Needham club and have the meeting at the pool there because "everyone" on the board belonged to this club. None of

- the members objected to this. They laughed and said, good idea. The board is made up of people of the same race and religion. I spoke up and said not everyone belongs to this club and was hushed by another member. I followed up with a later private call with the board president and mentioned my concern and hope that the board diversify.
12. I went in the basement to go tell my son that our dinner was ready, only to find him screaming at his computer, calling some people over the Internet several profanities, sadly including the n-word. To clarify, we are an Italian family, with no descent from Africa. This is unfortunately just one of several occurrences that I have caught him saying these words.
 13. When my son and his friends were maybe 15 years old, they were eating ice cream one day. One kid was Black, the others all White. The Black kid had a small hole in his white t-shirt, so the skin on his stomach showed through. One of the other boys pointed, and in an attempt at being funny, said "hey! you dripped some chocolate ice cream". The other boys thought it was funny, or at least didn't object. The boy being targeted looked up and swore at the kid who made the remark. This all happened inside of 2 minutes in the back hallway of our home, but I was standing right there and realized, at the time, how hurtful it was to have skin color called out like that. This happened about eight years ago now, but I've never forgotten and still feel the sting of it through this kid's eyes.
 14. Constant anti-Semitic jokes by fellow students that were ignored by staff because "anti-Semitism isn't a thing in the US anymore"
 15. My brother was called the N word when he was in 2nd grade by another classmate. Totally unacceptable
 16. I've had countless teachers confuse me with other Asian students even after being their student for an entire year. For example, during my junior year I did test corrections for a math test junior year and I never got it returned to me. When I talked to my teacher about it, he claimed that I had never turned it in and that I lost it. He made me retake the test. On the last day of school, he admitted to me that he found my exam and he had accidentally returned it to another Asian girl in a different section of that class. I have had my attendance marked wrong in multiple classes because they couldn't tell the difference between two Asian girls.
 17. I remember seeing small swastikas graffitied on the walls of [redacted] Middle school, as well as hearing people talk about other racist graffiti. I also remember a girl in my homeroom complaining about "anti-white racism" when she saw a video of a student saying he felt ostracized by the white kids in school. I also had a science teacher in middle school tell the only black student in our class that "we're not in the hood today" when he put the hood of his sweater up.
 18. Ignorant white students at Needham are comfortable to perform blatant acts of micro aggression. While preparing a presentation in a science class, a white athlete thought he could make his friends laugh by pasting pictures of "fat Asian babies" on his slides. Yes, that is what he searched on google. When I, an AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) who sat right next to him, called him out on his so-and-so joke, he proceeded to replace the "fat Asian baby" with a picture of a "fat Black baby". I wish I told him off instead of letting it slide the second time, but this should have never occurred in the first place. There shouldn't be someone monitoring you for aggressions— you have to monitor yourself and prevent yourself from acting on them.
 19. My across the street neighbor tried (unsuccessfully) to get our neighbors to sign a petition saying that our 25-year-old son, who is from Uganda is a danger to the community and should be forced to move away.

20. I was doing my daughter's hair one day when she was 4 and as she was looking in the mirror, she started playing with her eyes, stretching the sides out making them closed. I asked her what she was doing, and she asked ""Do I look like a Chinese person?"" I immediately swelled up with emotions but did my best to keep my cool. I smiled and said, ""Not at all, you look like a sleepy head and ready for bed"". She laughed. I then asked where she saw that from and she said two girls at school went up to her, doing that to their eyes, and then asking her if they looked a Chinese person. My heart sank. Practically holding back the tears, I laughed and said, well that's silly, you're Chinese and look at how big and round your eyes are huge. That day at drop off I told the teacher what happened. My daughter did not know what happened was inappropriate and was not upset by it at all, so no need to do anything, but if they see it happening again, please use it at a teaching opportunity. She said she would keep a close eye. This happened spring of 2018.
21. In high school I was in [redacted] math class back in 2008 (I'm going to say the first initial of the name because [redacted] is still a teacher and people should know how [redacted] treats students, but I'll let you guys figure out who [redacted] is). I got into a fight with one of my best friends in class (it was over a boy). In high school I had an IEP, so school was always a challenge, but I always noticed that this also affected how teachers treated me. So we're in class and me and this girl started arguing back and forth. Later in life we became friends again and she told me how she ran into [redacted] and she said, "have you spoken to _." And my friend goes "actually yes we made up! She's my good friend" [redacted] said, "I'm disappointed in you." to my friend. This doesn't seem significant enough, but in our class we had two boys who sided with my friend when we fought, and my friend later told me that those boys would be calling and referring to me and all the other black kids in class as "niggers" the entire time in class and [redacted] did NOTHING about it. [Redacted] heard it too!
22. This describes a series of events that took place during my time in the NPS system (2012-2016).
- 1) During my senior year in AP English I had to read a book called The Known World. This novel presented a narrative about slaves from the perspectives of both white and black characters. My teacher [redacted] on numerous occasions talked about how sympathetic some of the white slave owners were and how they just didn't know any better.
 - 2) I did read the Autobiography of Malcolm X for my junior year summer reading preparing for [class] which was a nice change of pace. However, the class discussions were deeply troubling. I recall discussing a passage in which a young Malcolm describes how much he hates being called the n-word by white. A student in the class turned this around and stated that Malcolm was at fault for "generalizing all white people." Instead of explaining to the student that Malcolm was describing the harsh treatment that he was victim to growing up in the Jim Crow South, my teacher said nothing. [Redacted] silence told me that she had no intention of disrupting anyone's world view or even calling anyone out on their blatant acceptance of racism.
 - 3) In [redacted] class my junior year, a student repeatedly said racist (including ""I'm not black so I can't listen to ghetto music"") remarks during class yet the teacher heard these remarks yet never reprimanded the student. In fact he questioned as to why the class was always targeting him for the remarks.
 - 4) During middle school (2011) I was pulled into the office because of the actions of another black student. I remember being treated like I was guilty of doing something wrong, when in fact faculty just couldn't tell us apart.

23. My friends were all in METCO in high school and one morning on their way to school they got off the commuter rail at Needham Center and found KKK fliers all over the parking lot and platform. We were all SO SCARED and had an emergency meeting with all the students of color at school.
24. January 1991 at the beginning of Gulf 1-7th grade son, socializing w/ friends, was jumped from behind on the patio during a [redacted] school break by a classmate. He was lifted into the air and thrown on the ground as the student, from a well-known Needham family, yelled at him that that's how you should treat all Saddam lovers. Our son got up and swung at the larger, heavier kid. Both boys were brought to the [redacted]. They were both given in school suspension and had to sit together on the bench outside the [redacted] office. The [redacted] called me and seemed pleased that our son wasn't physically hurt. I mentioned that I was more concerned about the racist comments. He dismissed my concerns as unfounded. I'm not sure how the Needham kid knew that our son was of Middle Eastern background as his last name indicates a different ethnicity. There were no apologies from the kid or his parents. The [redacted] just felt it was "boys being boys". Our son avoids the other kid throughout his remaining years at Pollard and NHS.
25. While waiting for a friend I was stopped and frisked by Needham Police. They approached me and asked if I was doing drugs. They assumed so because I was ""hidden"" behind a tree. I told them no and they proceeded to pat me down from head to toe and empty my pockets. They found nothing. After this they still took down my name and when I asked why they said because a lot of ""suspicious"" activity had been occurring in the area. This happened on the hill in front of Needham High School. This occurred in the summer of 2013 (I was 14 years old and about to be a sophomore in high school). It was about 2pm and this all occurred in broad daylight. "
26. As one of the only black students in my school system attending Needham high school as a minority resident of the town, and not part of the METCO system, was difficult. I felt as though I had no option but to assimilate to a majority culture and lose sight of my identity as a black woman. Having an unstable home life did not help. I felt as though I was never taken seriously about my troubles with schoolwork, my learning disability, or problems at home. I felt as though I was intentionally meant to fall between the cracks of what appears to be an outstanding, revered public school. Day to day interactions with particular students at Needham High were extremely difficult to navigate, all with keeping a hushed tone, as to not look like the angry race-baiting black girl. I fried my hair to make myself feel like I fit in better. I've been mistaken for other black students by teachers. I've had ""white power"" screamed at me at football games, behind my back while leaving school. I've had silver pickup trucks scream ""GET OUT OF MY TOWN"" as I walk home late at night after work, to the house I've lived in since I was 6 years old. Needless to say, growing up as a minority in Needham is not easy. The unseen hurtles a minority faces in a town like that are boundless. I feel as though I did not get the privilege to experience what it was like to be brought up and educated in an affluent community - but more of an outsider observing. And very rarely did anyone let me forget it. Also, having one African American studies class as an elective my senior year of high school, should have been a part of the history curriculum since the 2nd grade, and NOT just 3 weeks of the year. Year round.
27. When my son was in kindergarten a girl told him she could not play with him because of his skin color. This was at the [redacted] elementary school has a serious problem with race. The staff/teachers treat darker kids different they assume these kids don't have parents who care and that they come from nothing. I was dumbfounded by our experience at [redacted]. I transferred my son out of the school bc of how the staff treated him. My son is a warm

special boy he always wants to follow the rules seeing this happen to a kid this amazing disgusted me

28. In December 2010, I moved into [redacted] apartment at [redacted]. The first Month, two police officers had a downstairs neighbor out in the hallway in handcuffs, so an assistant office manager [redacted] could do her annual inspection of his unit. That wasn't my first impression. The first impression was the smell. With no smoking signs on every wall, the place smelled of smoke. My first thought was well I guess I'm not bringing anybody over for tea. There were so many things wrong with this housing project. And race was really only, but not only a manifestation of -- if you can believe it -- a deeper problem. Almost ten years later the miserable story continues.
29. In an RMV center, blacks treated whites with all respect, but when it comes to brown, they had a completely bullying approach
30. The act of racism happened against my child several times in the Needham school district. The first time we enter this problem was when he was in first grade this was his first year coming into the Needham district. His teacher didn't know us very well but the relationship was also strange I want to say within one week of school the teacher called DCF on myself and told them that my child was being abused and was afraid to come home. I then came into the school that very day to find out what was going I believe as a child of color you know what the consequences are when your parent comes to school. When I came into school that day my child was scared but the background of the Story was that day he put soap all over the mirrors in the boys bathroom and got caught so he thought I was coming there to discuss that issue. I then was told what had happened and my child said that I hit him with a toy his birthday was that Sunday I believe I was in school that Monday. I explained how do you think that I hit him and he just had a huge birthday party with a lot of his friends from school they then asked my child In front of me does he feel safe going home and my child said yes. Fast forward days later DCF came to my house and had to do a full investigation. They came back with no supporting evidence in my child's pointed out the stuffed animal that he was hit with and he then said he didn't mean it like that. I believe that teachers and faculty need to try to have a relationship with parents before causing mayhem and their families. This happened September 2019 also a week after school started my child want to sit at a table and one of the students then said I don't want to sit with the black kids. It was my child and another African American child. The teacher heard it and was very upset. I didn't hear about it until later when my child got home I was the one who had to reach out to the principal about the matter I believe it wasn't Handled in the full extreme but it should have been. I was called by one of the medical staff and she explained to me that the principal would be then reaching out to me I never heard back from the principal. I then had to write a lengthy email expressing my frustration. Days later the Parent reached out to me in defense of her son which I thought was very unacceptable. I believe that there was no reason that that parent was reaching out to me because the school had not even solved or address the problem. The parent just attempted to sweep it under the carpet and have a play date and I expressed to her I don't feel comfortable having a play date with a person that Child says I don't want to be around Black people and I express that to her in our email. I know that that wasn't the response she was expecting however I am going to take a stand for my child because honestly and truly it had to come from someone and it is not OK and I am just not gonna smile on someone's face that just hurt my child's feelings and another child. The school had the chance to speak about racism then and address it as a whole not just separating the child in the classroom away from my son and moving on with things. Later on down the year I remembered that they Said they would keep the child away from my son at all times. The children had a state fair guess what Child was seated next to my child the whole entire time of the state fair. The thing that frustrates me is

- what matters are hot you will be told anything to make sure it is no longer an issue at that point but following through has never been a thing that Needham has done."
31. My old boss [redacted] referred to me as a Pitbull. Instead of saying that I'm a strong worker who is determined to do my job efficiently and correctly, she referred to me as a breed of dog. My white counterparts who were blatantly rude and disrespectful to patients were never referred as Pitbulls. That never sat well with me. I ended up getting fired because my boss and another employee cornered me in an office and claimed that I attacked them. I'm only 5,2" and my boss and coworker are above 5'10". How could I attack two people way taller than me? It was because I would call them out on their double standards. It was sick.
 32. About two and a half years ago, when my daughter was in first grade, her teacher said to her class, "When a certain member of the class, who isn't here right now, tries to distract you from learning, what should you do? Can you suggest ways to keep yourself from getting side-tracked?" My daughter is white and although nearly half of her class was comprised of children of color, there were only two Black children, one of whom was the boy the teacher had referred to, the only child not present at the time of her speech. According to my daughter, he was frequently sent to the principal's office, often in trouble. I don't think the teacher considered how singling out one of two Black children as a troublemaker would inform how the other children would see him and other Black children. I wonder how the other Black child, felt seeing how he was treated. But most of all I wonder the damage that her behavior did to the boy, his feelings about belonging in the school, his ability to make friends, his relationship to learning. I had witnessed the negative attention he got when I worked in media - teachers admonishing him, the librarian and teacher speaking in quiet voices about him. (How he behaved is beside the point, but he was buoyant, social, outgoing, sensitive.) He was good friends with my daughter, something I actively encouraged because I could see how his easy-going, good-nature was a compliment to her shyness and inclination to be rigid, and he had been to our house for playdates several times. Even so, when the teacher asked, she raised her hand, happy to give examples of what she does to keep focus. She did not see incongruity between her behavior and her loyalty to her friend. Proud of herself, she told me the story. I asked another friend to question her daughter, a classmate, and she corroborated the story. I told the boy's mom, who had become a friend of mine. She was crushed by what had happened and, I'm sorry to say, only then did it become obvious what I needed to do. I asked her permission to speak with the principal about what had happened, and she said yes and thanked me. When I spoke with the principal, she seemed to understand the gravity of the situation immediately. This friend has since told me that at the start of every school year, her son is the victim of racism - his jacket being thrown out the bus window by another child, a child refusing to sit next to him and saying outright that it's because he's black, etc.
 33. I had a principal say to me that she knew she made a mistake about where my son was placed in a cluster at back to school night. I was the ONLY Black parent walking that cluster. My son presents as white, so he wasn't the put in the cluster with the Black and Brown kids. When a group of parents raised concerns that the district was segregating Black children to one cluster, the Superintendent NEVER reached out to us. It took six months before we had a meeting with him, and WE requested the meeting. Every school is different, and it depends on the principal. My kids went to hillside and my daughter experienced racism there with another kid in 2nd grade. The teacher and the principal handled this like it was an emergency. They persistently tried to reach me all day to let me know happened. They gave my child the power by asking her what she wanted and how. The principal had a no tolerance policy and I felt very supported. This does not happen at all schools. It's all about the leadership of the schools and the top.

34. I was in kindergarten, having lunch. I took out my lunch box, that had chicken and vegetables, with two Onigiri rice balls. The kids called me ""disgusting"" and ""gross"" for bringing Japanese food for lunch. I have PTSD as a result of this experience and many more.
35. I was in senior year, 2014. I was marginalized for being unable to assimilate to America. I was placed in a homeroom with one asian girl, but only because authorities thought I needed someone visually similar to feel more comfortable in homeroom
36. I've always felt like the token non-white person everywhere I went during my high school years. Many of my classes were completely white with me as the only non-white person. I noticed this was the case in many honors level classes. I began to take more accelerated and ap classes as the years went on, and I noticed another thing: most non-Asian POC were taking lower level classes. They seemed to be grouped together in the same classes and treated the worst by teachers... like really poorly. Black kids, especially, seemed to be treated as dumb and troublemakers. This points to a huge disparity of education in the POC community. I know that many of the black and Latinx kids in these classes came from less-affluent neighborhoods in Boston, but that is no excuse for their lagging behind in education. In addition to this, many of the clubs I was part of claimed to be "diverse" but really weren't at all. I was part of theater and robotics mainly. I saw 4 or 5 non-white kids in the cast on average. It was as if theater was a white person club. They only claimed to be "diverse." It's all a lie, and they let us believe it. Robotics, on the other hand, was more "diverse." The club was mainly white and Asian. I saw only one non-Asian POC throughout my two years on the team. This is pathetic. It seems as though larger, popular clubs cater mostly to white people and sometimes Asian kids. We cannot call our clubs "diverse." There needs to be more of an effort from the staff to include all students. Because of all this, I've noticed that my friends are mostly white and a little Asian. I've never been close with a kid of another race. I think a lot of it is because of the false "diversity" Needham claims to have. I also noticed that black and Latinx kids from Boston mainly hung out with each other in a big friend group. I wonder if it's because no other racial groups welcomed them to their classes and clubs. I also wanted to point out that NHS' education is based mainly on white and black racial relations. Sure, that's what America was in its beginning, but there is so much to American and world history than that. I was so shocked when we focused on the Asian experience for just one day in ap Lang last year. It was crazy. Kids should not have to take a high-level class just to talk about other racial experiences. Because of this, I've always always felt like the token POC at NHS. Of course, black people are treated so poorly in America, but it's important to point this out too. Latinx, middle eastern, and all other nonwhite kids never learn about other racial relations and experiences either. This needs to change. I do not want to sound insensitive to our current social climate, but I really needed to get this off my chest.
37. In my 11th grade English class, my teacher had us take a vote on whether or not we could say/use the N word when reading quotations from mark twain. This was a class with a single black person, and only 1 nonblack POC. Why were we voting on this? Why did the teacher let us believe that it was something up to our own discretion?

Physical Mistreatment

1. This was seven years ago. Our nanny routinely waited at an NPS bus stop on Hillside to pick up my daughter after school (with our infant son in the backseat of her car). One day a cop stopped by and asked her why she was there every day (someone had called the police on a brown woman with a brown baby in the backseat, who could be seen receiving a brown kid from a school bus if you watched her long enough). The policeman was polite, and that was that. Then her car began to get hit by a Bb gun each day. Until after the 3rd or 4th day her rear window was shattered- with our son in the back seat! V luckily, they were not hurt. We called

the police who said they tried (and I am sure they did) but could not figure out who did it. And we changed our bus stop so she would not be exposed to that danger again. I have no doubt this was because she was clearly a brown woman, and maybe because you could tell she was 'working class'.

Procedural Discrimination

1. Five years ago, we went to the Administration Building to enroll my son (Asian) in kindergarten. As we walked in the room, my son asked immediately to go over to the side for a language test. I proceeded to fill out the paperwork. One of the questions was What is your Primary language at home? Answered: English. Note: Families came in after us and their kids were not asked to take the test. Of course my son passed the test without issues. The following week I saw a school nurse who helped out at the Kindergarten enrollment, she mentioned my son was the only kid pulled aside she witnessed. I thought this was the end of it, but I received a call shortly after our enrollment day. I was asked to set up an interview for my son with a professional. I asked why? She replied he may need ESL as additional help! I replied my son's primary language at home is English and our doctor/ preschool teachers expressed no prior issues with my son's language learning skill. Well, a week later I received another call and asked me to set up an interview. At this point, I was frustrated because my son was targeted, the administrators did not read my answers on the enrollment form and they would not take my answer the first time. Just because we are an Asian family, it doesn't mean we don't speak English.
2. My son, who is originally from Uganda, has been stopped while driving in Needham twice over the last 2 years. In both incidences there's was no violation. He was stopped because he was a young black man driving a BMW. In both incidences the police were polite but took a condescending tone. On a more positive note, when I accompanied my son to the Needham police station to report that his license plate had been stolen, they were extremely helpful. They even wrote a note on police stationery saying that he had reported to the police that his plate was stolen. The officer then said, ""when you get pulled over, if this note is in your pocket, be very careful, explain to the officer what you're getting and SLOWLY take it from your pocket once the officer gives you permission to do that."" This Needham officer was appropriately concerned for my son's safety in the event of a traffic stop.
3. When I first moved to Needham, just had my 2nd child and was looking at joining play groups. It was hard to meet people. But later I noticed other moms were getting together with their kids however I never really received any invitations. At times it was isolating.
4. I am a real estate agent and I had helped a black family purchase a home in Needham. They wanted to get a sense of the school their children would be attending. My client went to the school office to ask if she could set up a brief meeting with the principal. She was told no. She told me the story and I called to ask about having such a meeting and I was easily able to arrange it. She and I went together and met the principal, but I was really horrified and upset to think that she was treated that way. There are not too many black families living in Needham but i hope that could change!
5. Although I've lived in Needham for 5 years (and worked here longer) I do not consider myself a 'true' Needhamite because I could never afford to live here permanently. I'm a rent increase or two away from having to move, and houses are laughably unaffordable. I don't feel welcome because of my socioeconomic status- I don't see anyone trying to fix the housing crisis in Needham.
6. This event happened in 2015. The following is an extract from a letter that I wrote to the then Chief of Needham Police, [redacted].Last Saturday evening, April 11, two of our friends

visiting our home with their two children had an interaction with a Needham police officer that was rather disturbing. Our friends, who are African---Americans, left our house at about 10:30 PM and went to their car that was parked on [redacted], which abuts our property. When they got into their car, an NPD cruiser pulled to the side of their car and stopped in such way that they could not leave. They felt very uncomfortable and afraid and felt compelled to roll down their window. The officer also rolled down his window and asked them if everything was all right. They felt compelled again to explain what they were doing (basically visiting friends). At that point the officer said good night and left. I am confident that the officer was motivated by doing his job well and also did not intend in any way to be disrespectful. On the surface, it also looks like an innocent occurrence. However, in the context of the racial history of our society, this seemingly simple situation has some negative and disturbing implications. Firstly, we have had dozens of Caucasian friends over several years go through the same routine without ever having to even see a police officer let alone interact with one. Secondly, it doesn't take much imagination, knowledge or understanding to interpret this in a negative way as a "profiling" event. Our friends had done nothing to warrant an officer's attention, except looking different and may be having a car that was registered in a different city. Once they came to the officer's attention there was no reason whatsoever for the officer to act in an intimidating way towards a family with young children.

7. When I was in high school, I thought it was awesome that the Needham police officers would let illegal things slide. For example, there are several times I knew they knew about underage drinking. There were times when my group of friends would get contacted by a police officer to give us a heads up that the cops will be breaking up the party. Obviously, that was cool at the time, but looking back, it's absolutely outrageous. This is not an anti-Semitic or racist matter, but it is definitely something that should be heard. The Needham police department is a very small community, And they pick and choose when they want to follow the law. Clearly not much has changed.
8. My friend in high school invited me over to her house real quick before we had to go to Needham street to get a few things for our gymnastics team (we had a sike party and we all had to wear pats jerseys to school the next day because we had a competition that day). Being from a low-income family, I wasn't able to partake in majority of the sikes because I couldn't afford to go out and buy outfits every time we had a competition! So my friend was nice enough to get me involved and help me get ready for one. When we got inside her house, I waited for her to change and her mom came in and asked her to come downstairs. Her mom seemed really mad, but I assumed that my friend might've did something. Her mom barely said hi to me and told my friend to come speak to her in the other room. Now this was my first time coming to her house, so I didn't know what was going on, but all of a sudden I overheard her mom say "I don't want people like her here. BRING HER HOME NOW!" So I don't know. It made me uncomfortable. I don't know if it was because I was black or what, but it was awkward because after she dropped me off at home, she ended up going to Needham street herself to get her patriots jersey and I was the only one on the team without one for school the next day, so not only was I kicked out of her house, I couldn't partake in a sports team activity because I couldn't afford to bring myself to buy what was needed to partake in the sike. Also she knew I didn't have anything, and it was because her mom didn't let her go with me, it was just all so awkward at school the next day. Surprisingly, her mom is on [redacted]. That's cool. 🤔
9. To begin, I am very thankful to have been educated elementary-high school in Needham via the METCO program. I've experienced my share of ups in downs academically, socially and unfortunately racially. I have had positive experiences with multiple staff members and students who I'll never forget. Sadly, I did experience things from students and staff members

that were negative, which at times had overwhelmed the positive. I could take this time to go through every experience from freshman year senior where I experienced flat out prejudice from students and staff members, but I won't. I will not recant the trauma I have experienced in order to get a point across. It saddens me every time I think of these instances, but in a twisted way they taught me to be strong. I do not want others to feel as how I do right now when looking back on their high school experience. I should smile and be comforted by the memories instead of saddened and frustrated that I allowed people to treat me that manner. Racism and prejudice at NHS is an issue. It's so deep rooted that I wouldn't even know where to start on how to tackle it. Racism and prejudice are learned behaviors due to a surrounding environment. Being a place of education, education is the obvious solution, but that is so surface level. You can push books and films in people's faces, but in the end it can only do so much. Staff and students need to leave how to not only be not racist, they have to be ANTI-racist. People need to understand that just because they are not personally affected, it doesn't matter. The school and the entire district needs to do better. There are so many other people that I know of all races who have experienced what I have, some worse. I hope my entry helps and frustrates you because enough IS enough.

10. my 5th grade teacher told a boy in my class that the character in his book couldn't be black, because the author didn't specify that the character was black. But the author also didn't specify that the character was white, or any other race. Instances like this reinforce the concept of whiteness being the default for humans. Maybe in Needham, and other MA wealthy suburbs, but not in the real world. The Needham public schools perpetuate ignorance. Not only is it unfair to the few black students, but it sets white students up for failure. Needham is a disgusting, toxic place.

Programmatic Discrimination

1. Even in social studies, Spanish, or English classes that were supposed to talk about race, we barely ever did. No black history, no guidance on how to talk about our differences, no talking about systemic racism even in AP gov. Nothing past "Uncle Tom's Cabin was written, and the Emancipation Proclamation was passed". We read multiple books that centered on the black experience and talked about how awfully the characters were treated but never discussed how it could relate to any of our lives today. I learned what Juneteenth was this year, from social media. That's frankly appalling.
2. I think it's sad that our school system only acknowledges the classic "white" holidays but overlooks important occasions like Chinese New Year, Diwali, Ramadan, and more. We seem to overlook any holidays of students of color and that kinda SUCKS. I'm Asian and family is extremely important part of our culture, on Chinese New Year the entire basis of the holiday is to spend the night with family and have a feast, celebrate your time together, and reflect. Every year of going to school in Needham I've always been overwhelmed on Chinese New Year with homework because of course teachers and the school do not acknowledge or even know if it's existence so they assign lots of homework for each class as usual. So after my family banquet, I stay up until like 4 am to complete that work. Sucks that for Jewish holidays or days like "Columbus Day" we get the entire day of school off, no homework, etc.
3. I already submitted a pretty lengthy response, but I wanted to add this: (sic) The staff at NHS are very noticeably mostly white. I've only met 3 or so black teachers and staff. And, the only Asian staff members are mandarin teachers. The Spanish teachers are also mostly confusingly white. There is only one native speaking Spanish teacher. This is crazy and worrisome.
5. There is so much that I didn't learn in history about race in America. Slavery was talked about many times in a detached way (or at least could remain detached to the majority white students and teachers) and only ever as a thing of the past. We never learned about how the

- institution of white people maintaining control over black bodies did not disappear with the abolition of slavery but rather evolved into different and more subtle forms (ex. convict leasing). Similarly, the civil rights movement was taught through a narrative of struggle then triumph, and this narrative does not acknowledge the ongoing legacy of segregation, and how again, the institution of white people exerting control over black bodies did not end but rather evolved to take even more covert forms. We did not touch on how redlining, restrictive covenants, and other forms of de facto segregation continued to enforce segregation and subjugation of black people and black bodies, and how our majority-white suburb is a product of that.
6. Think NHS does to a good job of seeing multiple sides to an issue, but I think it's especially important to teach certain loopholes and other things similar to that which have created this deeply corrupt system.
 7. I am quite frankly ashamed of the way Needham deals with teacher history to students. the only time I actually learned about Black history was in junior year history class and even then, only my teacher included that in the curriculum. We should not have to go 11+ years of Needham schooling and lies in the curriculum before we learn the truth. All of us who have graduated or are close to graduating have grown up believing the narrative we were told, and no teacher or administrator ever seemed to question this. We were all essentially groomed to be racist, racism is taught after all. While on the surface Needham seems to be progressive, the conversations in classrooms and hallways (specifically by white male students) clearly shows the deep seeded homophobia and racism that runs through this town that is seemingly ignored. Teachers are discouraged from bringing their political view into the classroom (which in and of itself is valid) but this has made it so hateful words and actions are excused because teachers do not know how to converse with these students and teach them how to be tolerable
 8. After talking with some friends, I've realized that what I learned about Black Americans and their experiences was pretty much only from my AP classes (AP US History, AP Lang, AP LIT, and AP Psych).
 9. I never learned about Juneteenth or the Tulsa Massacre. I learned them on my own through social media posts, and I'm disappointed I couldn't learn about these topics through teacher at NPS.
 10. My only POC teacher/counselor in my 12 years at Needham was from the language department.
 11. In my years at Needham, I did not learn much about BIPOC history and i did not realize till now how whitewashed our lessons were. I think that Needham needs to incorporate much more than only the "good" and peaceful parts of black history in America because this only creates a distorted washed view of our history. I remember one of my classmates asking a history teacher "why aren't we learning about black history month?" which then they responded "we already incorporate black history into lessons" when clearly, they do not. It also upset me that we did little talk as a school after the racist graffiti was found multiple times in the school. Growing up in a predominantly white affluent town
 12. One time in history class with [redacted] I asked why we weren't learning about black history because it was black history month. we hadn't talked about any black history. none. he immediately dismissed me and said we don't need to because it's already integrated in the curriculum. IS IT THO? if it were, wouldn't people know what JUNETEENTH IS? OR THE TULSA MASSACRE? OR WHO ANGELA DAVIS IS? OR WHO MARSHA P JOHNSON IS? the list goes on. the amount I've learned about black history, culture, and experiences, by myself, over the last 3 weeks than over 4 years at Needham high school... you

guys all need to DO BETTER. yes, Massachusetts is liberal. BUT BOSTON IS ONE OF THE MOST SEGREGATED CITIES. TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY. we also need more BIPOC teachers IMMEDIATELY. the lack of diversity is ASTOUNDING especially considering how much administration preaches about inclusivity and equality. WHERE IS THE INCLUSIVITY? WHY IS EVERYTHING WE LEARN WHITEWASHED? WHY IS BLACK AND LATINX AND LGBTQ+ HISTORY IGNORED? WHY DO BIPOC STUDENTS NOT GET TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR OWN PEOPLE? WHY DO WE LEARN ABOUT THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION 4 TIMES BUT NOT LEARN WHO ANGELA DAVIS WAS ONCE? ONCE. NEEDHAM, YOU ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM. DO BETTER NOW.

13. As a white, female student at NPS I did not experience many hateful things during my time spent. I never was called a racial slur, had homophobic comments made about me, or been discriminated against many times. However, I could talk about the obvious sexism first. How normalized a dress code that specializes the bodies of young girls has given them shared trauma of getting called out of class for their tank top being, “too distracting”. How, shared uncomfortable experiences with male students and faculty is normal. How, creepy gym teachers being a shared experience. How, boys catcalling girls, slut-shaming, speaking over them, and very obvious micro-aggressions, being normal. How, female athletes have received less praise from the AD, and how boys who have home games get bussed before the 3 girls teams with away games do, is normal. But overall, my experience can be seen as nothing as those of my BIPOC classmates. I have heard many of my classmates say blatantly racist comments. I have heard people make homophobic comments. I have heard this too many times. Too many times I have heard this behavior excused. Too many times has “Daddy’s money” erased the racist graffiti at Pollard or taken back the n-word used in a conversation. Too many times, too many. I have heard boys in the hallway refer to something as gay. I have heard boys call girls sluts. Or girls talking about the creepy gym teacher, or the boys who shamed them for getting with so and so. I have heard the students calling for an administration to teach about black history and DO something about the racist remarks made in a class or something homophobic that was written in the stalls. Could this be due to the fact that we never learned? Is it because we were never taught black history, or LGBTQ+ history? That many students don’t know what Juneteenth or The Stonewall Riots are? Or that we have like no BIPOC teachers? That we actively avoid these important conversations and lessons? Is it because people do not take these conversations seriously? I don’t know. What I do know is that it is time for change. Change in our systems, curriculum, and social lives. We have to normalize the changes happening in the outside world, and infiltrate that into our pathetic bubble of Needham. Because, too many times things have happened where there is blatant discrimination and inequality on our sports fields, in our classrooms, in interactions, where nothing is done, and it is time for big changes to be made.
14. As a white person, I cannot speak on what it would have been like to go through the Needham Public School system as a person of color. However, I can recognize that while my education was broad in many ways, it did not adequately include the racial history of both this country and this state. The one time I felt I actually learned about the racist history behind the Greater Boston area and suburbia in general was during an extremely interesting and informative (albeit rushed) class on One Day during my junior year. In that one hour, I learned more about the racist past of predominantly white suburbs like Needham than I did during the rest of my years attending Needham schools. I know that Needham High School recognizes the importance of educating its students on racism and biases present in its own community because it even has a program like One Day at all. However, reserving one day in the entire year for discussing racism and other bigotry is not enough and preserves the illusion that we are a post-racist society, even in a seemingly open-minded and accepting

- environment like Needham High. The Needham Public Schools need to incorporate more anti-racist education into their normal curriculum. I can also vouch for adding more accessible history electives, as I personally remember wanting to learn more about the racist history behind our country but feeling as if I did not have the option to do so, because the African-American History class available to seniors was a full-year course and unfortunately did not fit into my schedule. I believe that incorporating more lessons about anti-racism and the history of racism into the normal curriculum in addition to making history electives more accessible to seniors are both necessary and important actions that the Needham Public Schools administration must take to adequately educate its students about the world. Needham loves to promote “cultural proficiency”, but to truly allow its students the ability to be “culturally proficient”, we must first learn the truth about our cultural history.
15. I didn't get any sort of cultural competency education in Needham. Graduates from the Needham public school system are not prepared for the real world. Anywhere else you will encounter a significant number of people who look different from you, and the Needham public schools completely disregard this fact. I'm ashamed to tell people I grew up in Needham. It's a shameful place. DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT
 16. In my freshman English class I remember we were reading a book with race as an important theme (I don't remember which book). I remember my teacher explaining that when you are reading a passage out loud to the class and the N-word comes up you say “N-word” instead of the actual word. This was good and I'm glad I learned this fairly early on. However, my teacher also took a few minutes to explain that the proper term to describe black people was “people of color” and since that day I have always thought I was supposed to call black people “people of color.” In the past month I have learned that calling black people “black” is not offensive, and sometimes it is important to specify black people out of the broad group that are considered people of color. This might be something that has just changed since I was in 9th grade, but I can't believe I lived 5 years thinking it was offensive to call a black person “black.”
 17. We never learned about the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the colonization of Australia, the colonization of Hawaii (which is particularly terrible, because it's one of our states), the colonization of India, the wars happening in the Middle East, the Rwandan Genocide and colonists' role in it, etc. We never learned about the Civil Rights Movement beyond “MLK was peaceful and then segregation was over :)” which is a vast oversimplification and, in some ways, a lie. We never learned anything about the Women's Rights movement or women's historical and current inequality generally, which is a massive oversight. We never learned anything about Boston's own racist history except for in GBP, which most students don't take. We never learned about the structural racism that still exists and how it was created. We learned about the Revolutionary War far more times than necessary and ignored entire decades of crucial history to do it—that is, we learned about it over and over again over the course of several years to the exclusion of learning about other countries and incredibly important pieces of our own history.
 18. I have reflected a lot on my Needham education and the ways it has both served and hindered me in my life. I think there is a lot to be said for the quality of teachers at [redacted]. The curriculum, however, falls short of teaching an incredibly white, upper middle-class town about the inequalities in the world. As I have gone on to study Public Health and Race and Gender studies, I have become privy to the disservice that the Needham curriculum did for me and my peers. I don't think this is unique to Needham, and I loved my time there, but I do think that classes could and should be added to emphasize the world we are living in and the prejudice that runs rampant. Classes like Race Studies should be mandatory, as well as

- sociology, geography, linguistics, and other classes that help students learn about the important problems we face and how we as students can change them.
19. It became clear that many teachers don't understand the importance of children learning beyond the "white history" that is currently taught. I had a conversation with a high school teacher in regard to students learning second and third languages and his response was that all students need is Google Translate. He as a White man was not open to discussing anything further around cultural competence. I hope he no longer works at the high school by the time my children are there.
 20. I moved to Needham 4 years ago. I remember reading in this time articles how the school was developing curriculum and strategies to talk about diversity and inclusion, as a novel idea. It was surprising to me. It also felt outdated. I wondered about the quality of the materials, information as well as sincerity of the town and school leaders. My children refer to the restaurant [redacted] - as it is clear the clientele, the population is not diverse. We make a point to support [redacted] as it is a Black owned business- and it has the best coffee and baked goods in town. It appears Needham is trying but there is a vocal "all lives matter" mentality too. Keep doing your work and keep us informed how we can be of help too.
 21. I transferred to Needham High School my sophomore year. As a young white woman who was very successful by traditional academic standards I was continually validated, supported, given opportunities, and not questioned. I was funneled into accelerated and AP classes without being questioned as to whether I could successfully complete the work. I barely noticed (until it was pointed out by a college professor) that my accelerated and AP classes were proportionately way more white students than what I saw when walking by the college prep courses. I remember that most - if not all - of my teachers were white. I saw myself and my future success reflected in all of them. I was in the National Honors Society where I again saw a majority white space where almost all of the people in charge (president, vp, treasurer, secretary) were white. I easily became captain of the ultimate frisbee team where I could lead a majority white group and I never thought about different treatment of team members/why the team was mostly white/what my accountability in a leadership role was to think about or act on that. In class, we mostly read works by white authors and learned the history of famous white people. Overall - I saw my experience as a white person as the norm and was continually validated when I fit the model of success as dictated by white cultural standards. My homeroom teacher was a white woman who supported me in starting a club where we talked about justice and organized fundraisers for Rosie's Place, More Than Words, and even won an award from the Needham Rotary Club. My efforts were lauded, and I felt further pushed into a belief of change that placed me in power. I saw my role in the world to be as follows: I, as a highly educated white woman, get to a position of power at a predominately white institution (WHO, the government, CDC, non-profit) and using my analysis, come up with a way to fix a situation for people who are struggling due to some sort of barriers in their life (most likely POC in America or people in a different country). I never saw my accountability to the issues in my own town. I never considered the deep roots of white supremacy or the importance of dreaming and imagining a world to build towards instead of focusing on small fixes. When we analyzed problems, it most often fell back on an individualistic lens of change. I didn't leave school with an understanding of social movements or how political change happened. I didn't even understand who my state representative was or what powers a school board has. The emphasis was always on the other and I felt myself to be an objective person looking out on the world - constantly validated in that objective, analytical stance throughout my experiences at school. I saw a lot of these white cultural norms present at every level of my education at [redacted]

22. we didn't learn any African history besides when Europeans were colonizing it, we didn't learn about the black panthers in the civil rights movement, we didn't learn that most of the founding fathers owned slaves, we also didn't learn about many BIPOC historical figures or events.
23. I was shocked to learn all of the contributions and the experiences of People of Color that we weren't taught in school.
24. In the Needham school system, slavery is taught as an isolated incident of the past. It wasn't until college that I was introduced to how the economic, social and political patterns established during slavery continue to dictate our world today. From macro-scale neoliberal globalization agendas to micro-scale sociological and psychological effects, the intersectional reverberations of slavery pervade every profession, every neighborhood, every workplace. The Needham curriculum promotes an ignorance that allows its students to escape the responsibility to recognize and seek solutions to slavery's injustice and is therefore complicit in its continuation.
25. 2016: we are a black family we moved to Needham for the reputation of the schools because we have an older child with special needs. Our youngest child was at [redacted] school. A student of color noticed that most of the students of African descent were put in cluster 2. A few of the families of the children asked to meet with the principal. She admitted that she puts most students of color in cluster 2 and calls it "social engineering". She says it was so that they could potentially have another student of color in their classes, and also because she was not confident in the skills of the teachers in clusters 1, 3, 4 and 5 when it came to negotiating issues related to race. Our parent group moved into action to alert the school committee, superintendent, and community of the segregated going on at [redacted]. It was not an easy task to convince some of these players that the policy was problematic, never mind that it's unconstitutional. We got a civil rights attorney to help explain the issues to the school committee. Eventually the segregated practice was stopped, and a consultant was brought in to spend 6 months investigating the equity practices in the NPS. The consultant found, among many other things, that there was a large achievement gap between students of color and white and Asian students. Eventually the REAL commission was formed to address the findings of the consultant. As for our group of 10 families of black students, 8 took their students out of NPS in favor of private schools. Private education gives more attention to issues regarding race, equity and the education and competence of their educators than the NPS.

Other

1. I joined PTC soon after moving to Needham from Brookline around 2016-2017. I noticed it's a homogeneously white make-up of the PTC compared to what I was used to. I wanted to change that and help fuel some voice in the decisions to fund events. I quickly volunteered for a number of activities hoping to integrate into the system but noticed that there was some implicit bias in people's interactions with me. Thea makeup was exclusively women of the [redacted] PTC- which is a problem. Men should also participate in these events. Partly it could have been a sheer lack of knowing how to interact with a person of color, partly seemed a nonchalance toward an issue of color and implicit bias against color. I work in a highly diverse work environment in a well-known academic center, so I noticed immediately a difference in others' s visual perception of me and in how these women viewed me, could be a threat to their identity or something else. I would recommend changing the structure of the PTC and SC to reflect the changing color of the community at large.

2. When it comes down to singling out a parent at school it feels teachers always single out nonwhite people. They are less polite and sometimes to a point of being rude. Happened many times at pickups and drop offs and other school visits.
3. The incident took place in the afternoon in the [redacted]. A young boy, about four years old was coloring at a low table. A tall black woman was standing beside him requesting several times in a patient voice that he put his work away because they had to go home. She had a Jamaican accent. The child ignored her. After observing this for several minutes I spoke to him sternly telling him to put away his work and “obey this nice lady” . he immediately did as I told him. this happened about eight years ago. the woman thanked me looking very relieved. Being so young he, I concluded, probably picked up that attitude from some adult in his life.
4. African American family (from Jamaica Plain) were visiting us at our home for a dinner party. When leaving at the end of the evening after they had gotten into their car - that was properly and legally parked - out of nowhere a police car pulled alongside their car and stopped thus blocking them from leaving. The officer from his car asked them to open their window and asked if they were OK. We have lived in this house for over 30 years, have NEVER seen a police car at that time of night and have never had ourselves or any of our neighbors or guests ever having such a contact with the police. Our guests felt compelled to explain what they were doing there before the officer left and they could leave too. The whole experience was most insulting, humiliating, and unpleasant for our guests. For us, knowing that there has never been another guest or neighbor having such an experience was alarming. I wrote to the then chief of police. There was a response through the Human Rights Committee, which I appreciated, however, the police never acknowledged that incident, at the very least, could appear to be racially motivated. either as an act of profiling, or an outright act of aggression. I was hoping that the police would be more empathetic and understanding of how that action could make our guests so hurt. Our friends have not come back to our home again.
5. During winter of 2017, there was a lot of snow one day and the School had to let kids in the metro program go home early so the busses could get them home before the storm. My friend is black and was told he was excused from class so he could go home early, but he was not part of the metro program. He lives in Needham.
6. This school system simply does not care about the mental well-being of its students. During my sophomore year, my grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer and, mentally, I was going through a very difficult time. My grades plummeted and not a single faculty or administration member reached out to me. I even went to multiple people in the guidance office to try and talk to someone about what I was going through and no one would give me the time of day. One of the guidance counselors who no longer works at the school, [redacted], even told me something along the lines of “I don’t think I’m qualified to help with this.” A guidance counselor. Told me she wasn’t equipped to help me with severe emotional trauma. What is the point if not to help with something like that. During my senior year, I took [redacted]. Not only did we never talk about any events regarding slavery or the civil war, but she actually refused to talk about race. A few times someone brought it up in conversation and she would almost immediately change the topic. Out of all the teachers I had during my time at Needham High, there were only two that I felt actually cared about me as a person and who I felt I could talk to – [redacted]. Every single other teacher I had during my years in high school I felt genuinely did not care about me. After sitting in the front row of [redacted] English class for the ENTIRE year, on the day of his final he pointed at me and said it was my turn but did not call me something that resembled my name. He literally didn’t know my name after an entire year. I also felt that [redacted] quite literally hated me because

i couldn't understand the material, even though I was constantly going for extra help and trying insanely hard to get it. There were multiple times when he would ask me stay after when class was over so he could tell me how badly I was doing and then wouldn't offer to help me in any way. This was also in the year when my grandmother was sick. I even told him this and I have never had such a cold-hearted reaction from someone. He clearly did not care at all. Those were two of my worst experiences, but I have loads of stories. With the rare exception, the teachers at Needham high genuinely do not care about the wellbeing of their students. All they care about is that they go to good colleges and perform well on standardized tests and exams so that the school looks like it's producing adequate young adults. I am so beyond thankful to be out of this school system. Socially, I had friends and did fine, but academically it was my literal nightmare. Also, I don't think I ever once had a teacher who wasn't white during my entire time in the Needham school system (k-12) which is absolutely disgusting and appalling. I also often noticed that the administration seemed to go out of its way to boast about how diverse and inclusive the student body was, but it always seemed like they used BIPOC students more as marketing pieces to make the school appear in a certain way. I know for a fact that many of these students who were used as game pieces and props were facing similar academic struggles and had trouble finding support within the entire administration. I do not know if those students faced issues more often than white students did, but I would not be surprised if they did. I also know for a fact that when BIPOC students were in any kind of trouble with the school, more often than not they would be sent to meet with [redacted] who i actually forgot to mention as one of the faculty members i felt cared about me as a person (he's awesome, love him). This could be dismissed as normal [redacted] disciplinary duties, but to me it seemed that they sent the black students to speak with a black administrator which, in my opinion, has some serious implications. I also felt that they unfairly used him in a similar "game-piece" kind of way. Whenever they sent out a newsletter or notice about diversity, there was almost always a picture of him along with it. It felt like they were using him as a mirage to promote a relatively false sense of diversity and inclusivity. Anyway, this was way longer than I expected it to be, but I fucking hated the toxic environment that Needham public schools created and thank god every day that I am out of that hellhole. Fuck Needham and fuck every teacher I had that told me I wasn't good enough.

7. My child was walking home from school and someone set their dog on him.
8. My child went to a [redacted] restaurant in Needham racist slurs where directed at him and his friend. Restaurant owner did nothing.
9. Stopped by police and nothing said to Caucasian driver, but my child was asked to step out of the vehicle. Eventually, as it happened a couple of times, I believe the police realized he lives in Needham, so it stopped.