

TAKE 5: Using Data For Racial Justice

by Samuel Sinyangwe

Data scientist and activist Samuel Sinyangwe shared an engaging keynote on **Using Data for Racial Justice** at YouthREX's 2018 Knowledge to Action Exchange. Here are 5 lessons we learned from this talk:

01. Use data to amplify voices of marginalized communities.

Without data, systems that devalue the lived experiences of specific groups – and minimize or dismiss concerns identified as priorities by these communities – can be reinforced. For example, the lack of data documenting police violence and excessive use of force has been used to justify limited policy action. Additionally, the lack of data makes it harder to challenge harmful narratives in public forums.

02. Use data to identify solutions.

It's not enough to simply collect and compile information – data needs to come alive. When it's effectively mobilized (used to achieve a goal), data tells a story about what's happening in communities. It gives individuals the language, knowledge, and evidence they need to advocate for change.

03. Use data to challenge and debunk harmful perceptions.

Data can give activists and community members the evidence and language they need to contest harmful narratives, e.g. Evidence critiquing the perception of racialized communities as inherently criminal.

04. Use data to create pathways for youth engagement.

Successful movements for change tap into and build on the varied skills their stakeholders bring to the table. For example, the *Mapping Police Violence* project in America used crowd-sourced data collection to build a database documenting police violence across the country. Successful initiatives should leverage the unique skills and backgrounds youth bring to the work.

05. Use data to develop transformational policy.

Data can be used to develop transformative policies. However, to be impactful, policies must include implementation mechanisms and accountability tracking facets. Data provides an essential building block in policy making.