

Story Spine v.1

Fix the System Allegory: Fix the Ship

Once upon a time, there was a ship where passengers in the lower decks experienced flooding.

Everyday, the lower deck passengers spent most of their day getting water out of their cabins.

They could not afford an upgrade to an upper deck that didn't experience floods. There were organizations and programs that were established to help them deal with the flooding: buckets and towels were distributed. Over time, the distribution channel improved. The buckets got bigger. Sometimes folks from upper decks would come down to help with getting the water out of their cabins. But with each new flood, the exercise would be repeated, with no end in sight.

But one day, people on the upper deck saw that there was a leak that caused the flooding down below. Some of them, who led the bucket distribution programs decided to strategize their mission to focus on fixing the leak, and told other program managers and funders of these organizations about the findings.

Because of that organizations with more means and with appropriate skills shifted their focus to collaborate on leak-fixing.

And because of that other organizations whose talent and resources were focused on bucket distribution only, started to coordinate with the leak-fixing groups to ensure what they saw down in the decks got reported to be used as data for leak-fixing.

And because of that more innovation around leak-fixing and coordination across organizations flourished.

Until finally, the leak problem got addressed, and folks in lower decks had enough time to help steer the ship, and enjoy time on upper decks.

And ever since then, the the folks on the ship had more time to enjoy life (and realized that perhaps we now had enough resources to steer the ship to the shore, and get off the ship, so we didn't have to live in upper or lower decks. The ship could be decommissioned.

Story Spine v.2 Fix the System, Not the Disenfranchised

Once upon a time, there were many nonprofits, government assistance, and corporate programs that strived to help the disenfranchised so we can embrace diversity and practice inclusion.

Everyday, the organizations and their programs went about optimizing how the folks from underrepresented groups can lean in: offering special education programs; employee resource groups for different societal categories such as race, gender, religion, sexual preference, etc.; affirmative action; monetary assistance; segregated housing; free/low-cost services and temporary relief (food, shelter, health, loans)...asking them to lean in.

But one day, thanks to a confluence of understanding and conversion of various communities, we realized the society was disenfranchising some segments of our community: systemic biases and procedures were exposed.

Because of that organizations with more means and with appropriate skills shifted their focus to collaborate on understanding the system that was creating and perpetuating the disenfranchisement of some segments of our society. They started with already existing frameworks such as United Nation's [SDGs](#) and speaking to other stakeholders to ensure this inverted philosophy (they are disenfranchised vs. system made them disenfranchised) and shift their focus and activities (and the intent/culture/attitude/approach) accordingly.



Story Spine v.2 (cont'd) **Fix the System, Not the Disenfranchised**

And because of that foundations and other umbrella organizations started funding programs and other entities differently: asking organizations to assess what portion of their programs were focused on system vs. people level fix.

And because of that more orgs and programs only focused on people level fixes assessed the composition and effectiveness of their programs. If they were optimized for people level fixes and did not have the means to change (or would not be effective to do so), they continued to focus on people level fixes (because we still needed those services until the system got fixed). They recognized their role in the ecosystem and coordinated with others to share data that would help the orgs focused on system level their observations that would help fix the system.

Until finally, we stated to move the needle with solving “power-isms” of our society: racism, sexism, ageism, classism, ableism, and more, so everyone had access to a basic quality of life around the world.

And ever since then, new initiatives would be checked for biases (treating others as “lesser” vs. seeing our system that is making them lesser), and organizations with the reach to make these differences carefully monitored, and focused on global goals for the next generation of humanity (that includes our larger ecosystem.

