



LOCAL AND REGIONAL  
**GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE ON  
RACE & EQUITY**



## Drivers of Inequity Scenario<sup>1</sup>

**Narrator:** Recent media reported that only about half of African American, Latino and Native American students graduate from Seattle Public Schools. Gayl, who is African American, and her boyfriend Diego are raising their child, who they had when they were fifteen. She lives with her parents at Yesler Terrace, a public housing project and attends Garfield High School. Due to occupancy standards, Diego cannot live with them. Diego, who is from El Salvador, recently dropped out of Garfield. He works evenings at a gas station near her school, which allows him to care for his daughter during the day while Gayl continues with school. He meets them at school for lunch each day so they can have family time.

Recently, Diego was arrested for selling marijuana, which he justified as a way to provide necessary income for his family since his job only pays minimum wage. Gayl is struggling to both maintain her grades and keep her attendance up due to childcare needs. Gayl is in a meeting with the school social worker, Jessica, who is white, and her favorite teacher Carlos, who is Filipino. Carlos is one of the few teachers of color at her school.

**Jessica:** I wanted to start by saying what a strength it is that you have stayed in school. Most girls in your position would have dropped out sooner. Unfortunately, we are here today to talk about your violations of the District's attendance policy. Once again you have had more than seven unexcused absences this past month. We may have to refer you to Juvenile Court for a truancy petition. This will require you to go to a Truancy Workshop.

**Carlos:** Gayl, I would love for you to stay in school but your absences are affecting our classrooms and your grades. It seems like you need to either get your act together or consider dropping out of school. Have you thought about getting a GED instead?

**Gayl:** I know I need a real high school diploma. How can I attend a Truancy Workshop? I barely have time to make it to school. Diego and I are working hard to make sure I graduate. I just have one more year. Don't you believe I am smart enough to do it?

**Carlos:** From the recent thing I have heard about Diego, I fear he may be more part of your problem than a solution for you.

**Narrator:** Gayl leaves the meeting feeling defeated. She runs into Brandon, a white student who is a leader in student government.

**Brandon:** Wow, I was bummed to hear about Diego! Without him none of us would have access to all that great stuff we get from him. How is he doing?

**Gayl:** His court date is this afternoon so he will finally get out of Juvenile Detention. Hopefully he will still have his job. It looks like I may have to drop out now, seems I just don't have what it takes to graduate from high school.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on an exercise from RaceForward (<https://www.raceforward.org>) and adapted by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.



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**Brandon:** I am sure you can, it just takes more self-discipline and determination. Try harder, Gayl, it is definitely a lot of work. If I can support you in tutoring, let me know.

**Gayl:** Thanks, but I am already part of the Youth Tutoring Program down the street at Catholic Community Services. It is great when I can get there. I just need more childcare so I can go.

**Narrator:** After school Gayl hurries downtown to meet her parents at Diego's court hearing. Afterwards, she and Diego are deciding how to move forward.

**Diego:** This is impossible. It is my first offense so they say they let me off easy. But they gave me a SODA - a "stay out of drug area"- and I cannot go to a three-block area where I was arrested or I will violate my parole. The three blocks includes where Garfield and my job is.

1. **What are examples of individual racism?** (Definition: Pre-judgment, bias or discrimination by an individual, based on race)
2. **What are examples of institutional racism?** (Definition: Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally)
3. **What are examples of structural racism?** (Definition: The history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.)