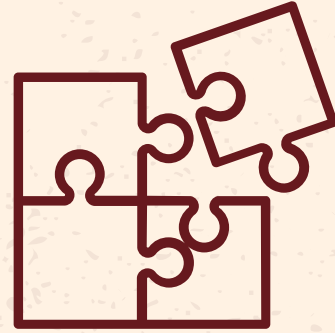


Culture Shift Presents...



**UNMASKING
RACE, ETHNICITY
& CULTURE**

A Strategy Lab on Power, Identity, and Business

WITH JAYCHELE NICOLE

Who Is Jaychele?

Founder & Chief Strategist, Culture Shift Group

Wasserman Intern

Red Bull Student Marketeer

Former Black United Body President

Founded first nonprofit at 12

Led Gen Z: We Want To Live youth movement at 16
Media & DEI work with Extreme Networks, New Relic,
Beekman 1802, The Dime Agency

**RECOGNITION: E.L.F. X HERCAMPUS 22 UNDER 22,
FALCON SOCIETY, EARL AVERY MLK AWARD**

My work: study **patterns, people, power** →
design strategies that **shift culture**



**WHEN YOU HEAR THE TERM 'DEI'
NOW, WHAT FIRST THOUGHTS
OR FEELINGS COME TO MIND?**

WHAT TO EXPECT

THIS IS NOT A LECTURE... IT'S A STRATEGY LAB.

1. We'll break down **race, ethnicity, and culture** through a strategist + sociologist lens
2. Learn **frameworks** that show how inequity gets built, monetized, and reinforced
3. Apply them to **real culture today**:
 - a. **TikTok trends and filters**
 - b. **WNBA narratives** (A'ja vs. Caitlin)
 - c. **NIL deals and NFL hiring rules**
 - d. **Love Island edits and desirability politics**
 - e. **Brand campaigns** like Nike, Fenty, and Pepsi
4. Leave thinking like a **business strategist** who can spot patterns, study power, and decide: will you **reinforce the system, or shift it?**

THE ICEBERG OF RACE, ETHNICITY + CULTURE

- What's visible is only the **tip**. The real **forces** live below.
- The surface shows **identity**. The depth reveals **power**.
- **Culture** is shaped as much by what you don't see as what you do.
- Hidden layers determine who gets **access** and who gets **excluded**.
- Beneath the surface is where **systems** reproduce **inequality**.
- **Business decisions** are often made at the surface without understanding the depth.
- **Strategy** starts with what's under, not what floats on top.



FRAMEWORK 1: RACE AS STRATEGY

The Core Idea

- Race was not discovered → it was **invented for power + resource control**
- Slavery, colonialism, Jim Crow → race as the original business model of America
- Today... race still organizes who gets access, who profits, who pays the cost

Case Study: FEMA Disaster Aid

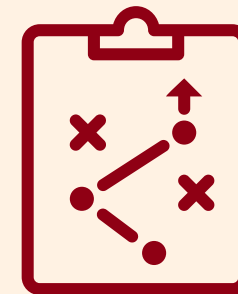
- FEMA consistently gives **more aid to white homeowners** than Black homeowners with the same damage
- Hurricane Laura: white homeowner received \$17,000 while Black homeowner with identical damage got \$7,000
- Disaster aid isn't neutral → it often **protects existing wealth gaps**
- Relief dollars flow faster and bigger to white, wealthy neighborhoods → **inequity gets rebuilt into the recovery**

Strategist Lens

Race is not biology → it is **economics**

From plantation profits → to mortgage algorithms → to disaster aid formulas, race functions as a **strategy for resource control**

Bottom line: Race is America's original business model + the code is still running



Source: [“In Storm’s Path: FEMA Fielding Criticism for Racial Inequality in Disaster Aid” \(CHN, 2021\)](#)

FRAMEWORK 2: ETHNICITY AS CURRENCY

The Core Idea

- Ethnicity shapes belonging, identity, and markets
- Business often strips context and turns ethnicity into profit
- *Framework*:
 - **Appropriation** → brands take without credit
 - **Production** → communities create
 - **Profit** → corporations cash out

Case Study: The Ethnic Aisle & Trader Joe's Copycatting

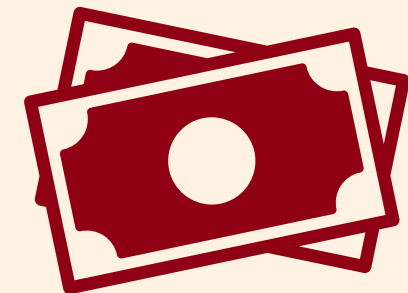
- U.S. grocery stores still silo non-European foods into an “ethnic aisle” which signals “foreign” versus “mainstream”
- Trader Joe's has been accused of copying multicultural brands like Brooklyn Delhi and Fly By Jing and selling watered-down versions under names like Trader Ming's or Trader José

Strategist Lens

Ethnicity is more than food or fashion → it's **economic power**

Who owns the aisle and who gets pushed out determines whose culture becomes mainstream and whose gets sidelined

Bottom line: Ethnicity fuels culture, but the profits rarely reach the communities that create it



Source: [“Why Do American Grocery Stores Still Have an Ethnic Aisle?” \(NYT, 2021\)](#) and [“We Need to Talk About Trader Joe's” \(Taste, 2021\)](#).

FRAMEWORK 3: CULTURE AS BATTLEFIELD

The Core Idea

- Culture is not neutral → it is the **rules of the game**
- Dominant groups write the rules
- Business chooses: enforce them or disrupt them

Case Study: Angel Reese vs Caitlin Clark

- Both used the same “you can’t see me” gesture
- Clark praised as competitive → Reese labeled “classless”
- 2025 Rice University study of **700K tweets** found:
 - Reese described with 3x more negative language
 - Black women athletes tied to “aggressive/disrespectful”
 - White women athletes tied to “passionate/competitive”
- Confirms that culture enforces **racialized rules of celebration vs punishment**

Strategist Lens

The battlefield is not just sports → it is hiring, media, daily life

Professional norms get treated as neutral but are really coded rules

What counts as “common sense” is often **who wrote the rules**

Bottom line: Culture is not neutral → it is contested territory where power decides what is rewarded and what is punished



Source: [“Study Suggests Racial Bias in Angel Reese–Caitlin Clark Debate”](#) (Rice University, 2025).

FRAMEWORK 4: RACE AS THE OPERATING SYSTEM

The Core Idea

- Racism is not just bad behavior → it is **code written into the system**
- Race functions like the operating system → institutions are the apps
- You can update an app with new policy but if the OS is biased, inequity continues

Case Study: AI Lending Algorithms

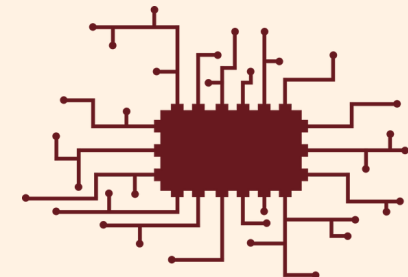
- 2024 Lehigh University study tested AI loan chatbots with identical financial profiles for Black and white applicants
- Black applicants were:
 - **Denied more often** for the same loan amounts
 - Given **higher interest rates** even with strong credit
 - Asked for **more documentation** than white applicants with identical information
- Shows how bias gets embedded in code → the system treats race itself as a risk factor, even when all other variables are controlled

Strategist Lens

From redlining to algorithms, bias is embedded in financial code

Until the OS is rewritten, every app in housing, healthcare, or hiring risks reproducing the same inequities

Bottom line: You cannot debug inequality by fixing one app → you have to rewrite the operating system



Source: [“As AI Takes the Helm of Decision Making, Signs of Perpetuating Historic Biases Emerge”](#) (Missouri Independent, 2024).

**IF YOU WERE A CEO, WHICH
FRAMEWORK WOULD HELP YOU
MOST IN SPOTTING BLIND SPOTS
INSIDE YOUR COMPANY?**

HINT: FLIP THE FRAMEWORKS INTO A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

SECTOR MAP + FRAMEWORK LENS

Sectors (case examples):

- **Finance** → AI lending bias, FEMA aid gaps
- **Media** → Angel Reese vs Caitlin Clark coverage
- **Food** → Trader Joe's copycats, grocery "ethnic aisle"
- **Housing** → Mortgage algorithms, redlining 2.0
- **Tech** → TikTok filter bias, hiring algorithms
- **Fashion/Beauty** → Hair bans, cultural appropriation

Each sector is a battlefield where power, markets, and system code collide.

Using the Playbook

Race as Strategy → ask: who gains/loses from how we allocate resources?

Ethnicity as Market Power → ask: are we profiting off culture without crediting its creators?

Culture as Battlefield → ask: what "rules" of professionalism or success are coded and who do they exclude?

Race as System Code → ask: are we updating policies (apps) while the deeper system (OS) stays biased?

CULTURE SHIFT LAB

- Break into groups of 3-4
- Each group has a unique case study handout
- Use the questions on your sheet to analyze through the 4 frameworks
- Prepare a **1-2 sentence takeaway** to share with the room:
 - Your case → your biggest insight
- **Goal:** See how the frameworks show up across sectors

UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS

THE QUESTIONS YOU DON'T SAY OUT LOUD

This is the space for the uncomfortable, the messy, the real

No wrong questions → if you're thinking it, ask it

Our only rule: curiosity over judgment

EXIT REFLECTION: YOUR LAST WORD

Write 1-2 sentences: What's one insight you're walking away with today about race, culture, or business as a system?

Bonus: If you were in power tomorrow, what shift would you make first?

Scan the QR code to share anonymously. Your answers help me see what stuck and how to sharpen this lab.

