

INEQUALITY IS

## Jeff Chang on race, culture, and inequality

This video transcript is from an interview with author and music critic Jeff Chang. It's part of the Ford Foundation's #InequalityIs series, featuring leaders in a wide range of fields talking about what inequality looks like from their vantage point, what they're doing about it, and where they see other opportunities for change.

A conversation about inequality in all its forms.

### **Transcript begins.**

**JEFF CHANG:** We live in an era where the internet makes us feel like we can find out all of the things that we want to find out. And we can go to bed every night feeling like we know the world. But the reality is, because of the way that the cultural landscape is configured, there are millions of marginalized people whose stories we never hear, we never see.

[Inequality is logo. A graphic black equal sign with an orange slash through it.  
#InequalityIs. Jeff Chang, author, music critic. A middle-aged Chinese American man in a blue shirt.]

We're headed towards a country that's going to be a majority minority, and people have said because we're diverse now we no longer have inequality. And that's not true at all. Diversity is a means towards achieving equality and equity. But in and of itself it doesn't mean that we have a presence of equality and equity. I think in order for us to undo inequality, we really have to take seriously the question of cultural equity. And cultural equity is access to the tools to get your story and your narrative out into the world. And it's also about people hearing that story. So it's also about access to those stories through distribution, through the ways in which people are able to communicate one to the other. We aren't able to see the structures that create our culture for us. And so the cultural complex is, in fact, very unequal. We still don't have a lot of representation of people who are not white in the cultural complex—whether in the culture industry or in the nonprofit arts world, and that significantly affects the kind of stories that we're hearing, and the people who remain invisible to our consciousness. I think that the way we can begin to address inequality is to be able to turn our communities into cauldrons of creativity, and be able to recognize the invisible folks among us. And I think that once people begin to see each other in their true humanity, in their full humanity, that then leads us towards creating a much more just and equal society.

[Inequality Is Logo. Join the conversation. #InequalityIs.]

### **End of transcript.**