



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.*

**Title:** Race and Social Justice Training

- As Related To:**
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal One: Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.                | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Two: Develop comprehensive accountability, recognition, and supports for students, schools, and districts. | <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Four: Provide effective oversight of the K-12 system.  |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |

- Relevant To Board Roles:**
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Communication              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> System Oversight             | <input type="checkbox"/> Convening and Facilitating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy                     |   |

**Policy Considerations / Key Questions:**

1. What are the tools and strategies the Board can use to better understand the causes of and address race-based opportunity gaps?

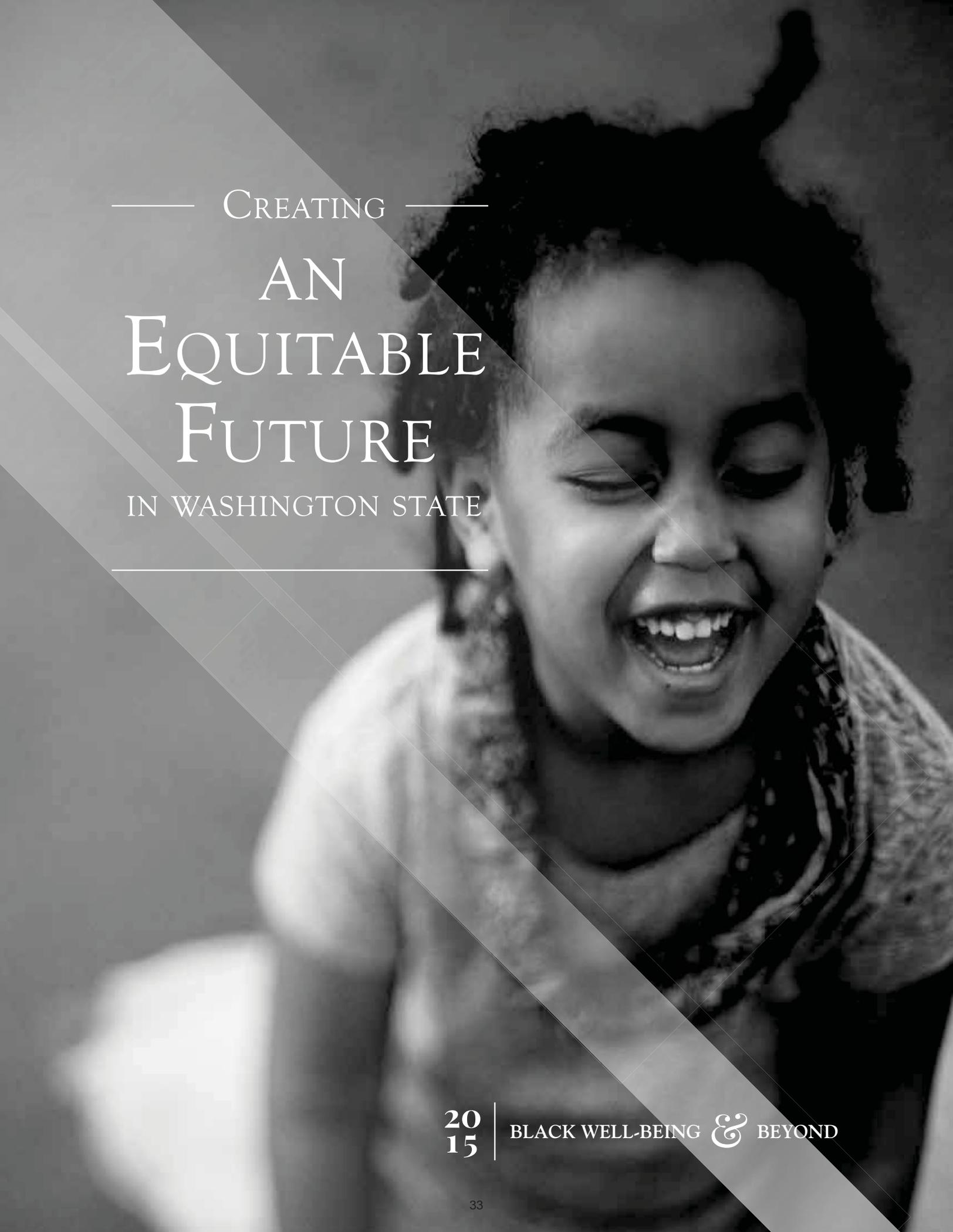
- Possible Board Action:**
- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review | <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approve           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

- Materials Included in Packet:**
- Memo
  - Graphs / Graphics
  - Third-Party Materials
  - PowerPoint
  - Other

**Synopsis:** The City of Seattle Office of Civil Rights Race and Social Justice Initiative will be providing State Board of Education members and staff with a race and social justice training. Included in your packet are three readings in preparation for the training and discussion.

The readings are:

- An excerpt on education from the 2015 “Creating an Equitable Future in Washington State: Black Well-Being and Beyond” report sponsored by the African American Leadership Forum, Centerstone, and the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs.
- An article from the Clearinghouse Review Journal of Poverty Law and Policy, “Using a Racial Equity Impact Analysis in the Minneapolis Public Schools.”
- An article from the April 2003 issue of Principal Leadership “Reasons for Hope: You Can Challenge Educational Inequities.”



— CREATING —  
AN  
EQUITABLE  
FUTURE  
IN WASHINGTON STATE

20  
15

BLACK WELL-BEING & BEYOND

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THIS STUDY IS DEDICATED TO  
GARY CUNNINGHAM FOR HIS DEVOTION AND ENDLESS  
SUPPORT TO SEEING THIS THROUGH.

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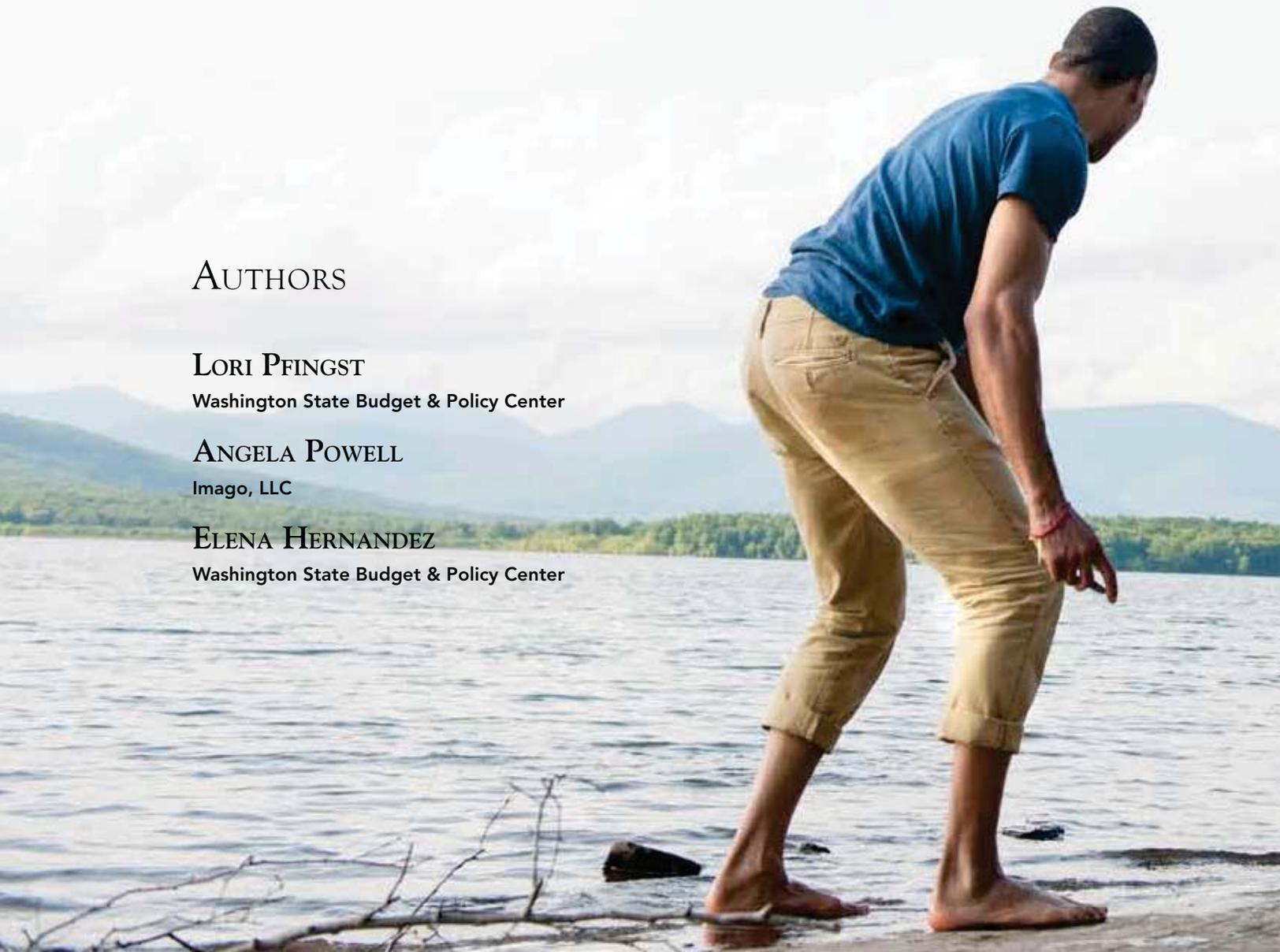
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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TABLE OF

# CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION .....	I
THE DEPTH & DIVERSITY OF BLACK WASHINGTONIANS .....	4
ECONOMIC SECURITY .....	8
EDUCATION .....	14
CRIMINAL JUSTICE .....	20
HEALTH .....	26
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT .....	32
CONCLUSION .....	36
SOURCES .....	38

Systemic barriers to opportunity and racial oppression have impeded progress for Black people, with devastating consequences for nearly every indicator of their well-being. For example:

- A history of exclusion from economic and educational opportunities has systematically denied Black people access to the middle class and the intergenerational benefits of prosperity. This history has affected generations of Black Washingtonians, resulting in poorer job prospects, lower rates of college completion, higher rates of poverty, and lower net worth than their peers.
- The cumulative impact of social and economic exclusion takes a toll on every area of well-being. For example, Black children and adults in Washington state have higher rates of illness and death than many of their peers, and the second lowest life expectancy of any racial and ethnic group.
- National and state systems have evolved to threaten progress for Black people. Since 1980, following the roll-out of the War on Drugs, the prison population has increased 300 percent in Washington state. Black people are disproportionately more likely than white people to be sentenced to prison—for drugs and other crimes—even when their backgrounds and circumstances are similar.
- In a political system so heavily influenced by wealth, and one that limits the right to vote for people

with a felony conviction, fewer economic resources combined with unequal criminal justice outcomes put Black Washingtonians at a disadvantage politically.

The contributions that Black Washingtonians have made in spite of such barriers should inspire all of us. Imagine what we could accomplish as a state if barriers to opportunity were removed for everyone. This report is one contribution to making this vision a reality.

## GOALS OF REPORT & AUDIENCE

This report is the first phase of a longer effort by African American Leadership Forum–Seattle, Centerstone of Seattle, and the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs to elevate and amplify the voices of Black Washingtonians in the decision-making processes that influence their everyday lives. It is inclusive of all people with a common ancestry in Africa and who racially identify as Black in Washington state, while also honoring the vast differences in history, experience, and culture within the community as a whole.

The primary audiences for this report are policymakers and the people who influence them, but we hope the findings are shared in communities throughout the state. The purpose is threefold:

**To evaluate barriers to opportunity and conditions in key areas of well-being for Black Washingtonians.**

Five barometers of well-being are analyzed in the report: economic security, education, criminal justice, health,

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## TWO

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# THE DEPTH & DIVERSITY OF BLACK WASHINGTONIANS

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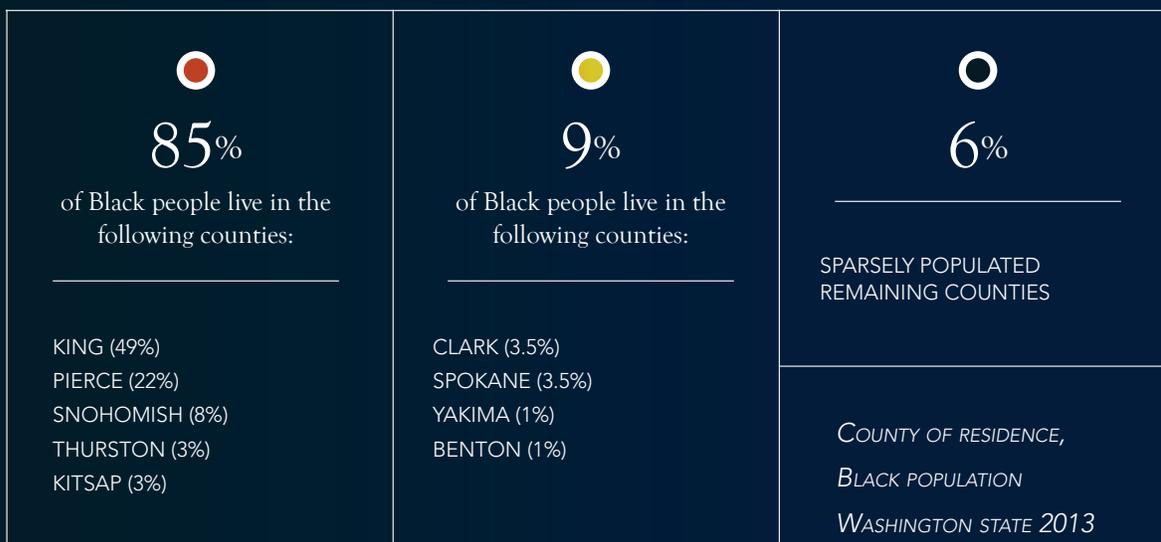
**T**he 238,000 Black people living in Washington state today encompass a wide range of diversity and depth of experience. They share a history as the descendants of survivors of the Middle Passage who became enslaved in the antebellum South, and are the ancestors of the Freedom Riders, the poets of the Harlem Renaissance, the founders of jazz and blues, the veterans of every American war, epic sports heroes and Olympians, and the leaders of the Civil Rights movement, among countless other economic, social, political, and cultural influences. Their ancestors arrived in the Pacific Northwest as far back as 1788<sup>1</sup>, but came en masse during The Great Migration—the period between 1910 and 1970 when large numbers of Black people left the South to pursue greater opportunities in the urban centers of the North, Midwest, and West.<sup>2</sup> Since 1970, the number of African-Americans living in Washington state has almost tripled.<sup>3</sup>

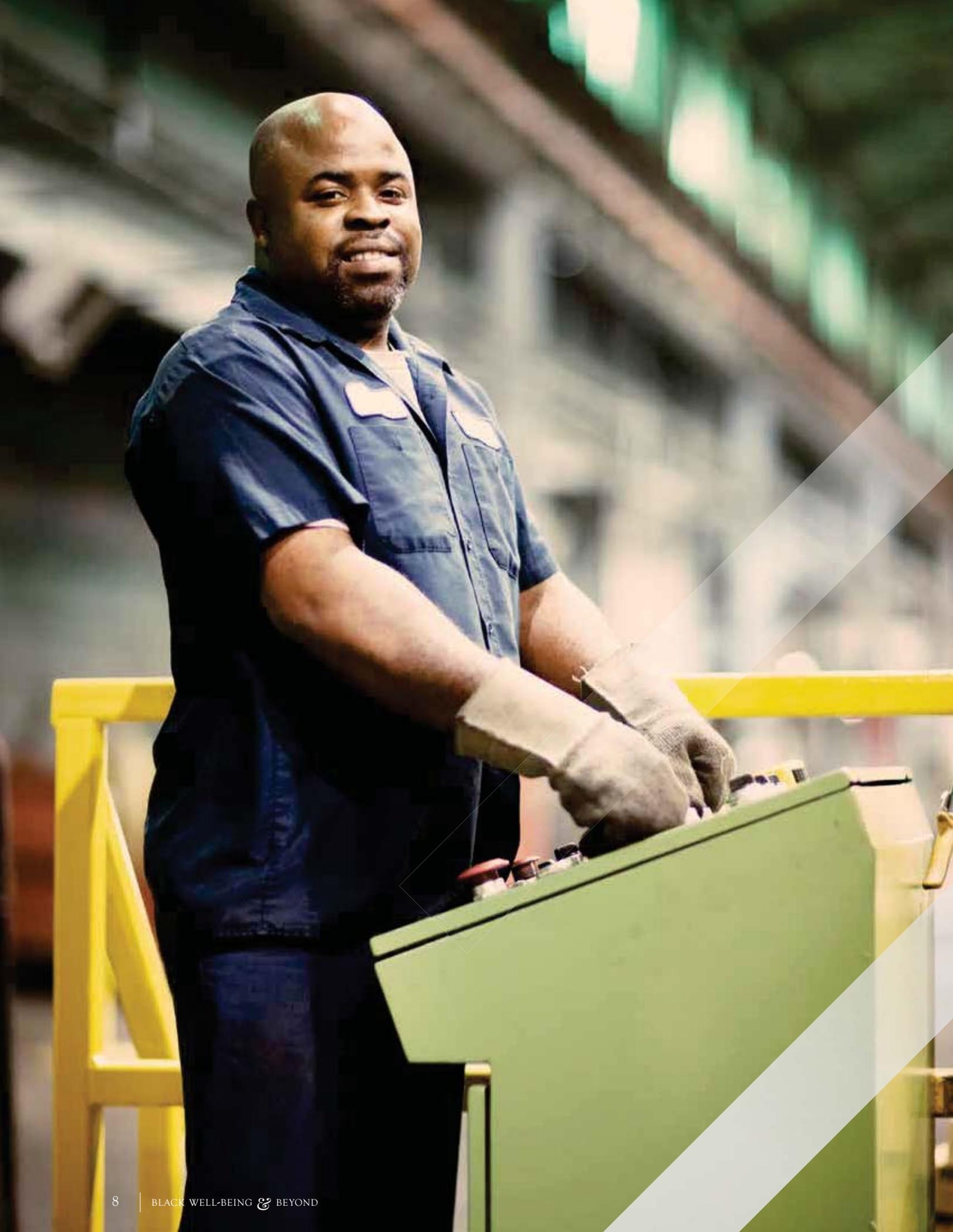
The 1970s also saw the beginning of an increase in the number of Black people in Washington state who were born outside of the United States, as several federal laws<sup>4</sup> made it easier for immigrants and refugees to come here. The number of Black immigrants and refugees in Washington state was small initially, and they largely came from Europe, Canada, and Latin America to seek education and job opportunities. As political instability, famine, and violent conditions grew in Africa, however, the number of Black immigrants and refugees from that continent increased dramatically.<sup>5</sup> Today, the vast majority (83 percent) of Black people born outside of the United States were born in Africa (*see map*),<sup>6</sup> bringing their own unique brand of knowledge, culture, skills, and experience to Washington state.

## WHERE BLACK WASHINGTONIANS LIVE



NEARLY NINE OF EVERY 10 BLACK WASHINGTONIANS LIVE IN FIVE COUNTIES SURROUNDING THE SOUTH PUGET SOUND.





# 2x

The unemployment rate for Black Washingtonians in 2013 was 14 percent, twice as high as the state rate of seven percent.



# 6 in 10

The number of jobs that pay less than what is needed for a family of three to meet basic needs on one income in Washington state.



# 54%

The share of monthly income a Black family of three pays for housing and child care—the two biggest expenses a family has.

The average family in Washington state pays 36 percent.



## MAJOR OBSTACLES TO ECONOMIC SECURITY

The economic security of Black people in Washington state today, and the future of the entire middle class in our state, cannot be understood or envisioned apart from this history. The barriers to economic security for Black Washingtonians today have taken on new forms, but they have evolved from old challenges that must be tackled if we are to create equal economic opportunities moving forward.

**Disproportionally high rates of unemployment.** As the Great Recession gripped Washington state, policymakers' attention rightfully focused on a soaring unemployment rate, which reached a peak of 10 percent in 2010. The concern about such high unemployment was warranted—an economy cannot function when such a large number of people are without work and businesses are without customers. The total unemployment rate, however, masked a more troubling trend for the Black community. The rate among Black Washingtonians rose to a staggering 21 percent in 2010, and remained at 14 percent at the end of 2013, compared to the state rate of 7 percent.<sup>11</sup> The same level of concern for the general population should apply to all groups. The Black community cannot thrive when such a large share of the community cannot find work.

**A low-wage job market with racial discrimination.** The lack of employment opportunities for Black people is compounded by the low quality of the jobs available. While Washington state has the largest share of high-wage, high-skill science, technology, engineering, and math

## MAKING PROGRESS ON ECONOMIC EQUITY: KEY GAPS TO CLOSE

As a result of these barriers, Black people are far more likely to face economic hardship than many of their peers, and often lack the savings and assets to invest in their future or withstand the impact of a personal financial crisis or weak economy.

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### COMPARED TO WASHINGTONIANS GENERALLY, BLACK PEOPLE:

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**Are less likely to have a job that pays enough to meet basic needs.** Just more than one quarter (28 percent) of Black workers in Washington state are in a job that pays enough for a family of three to meet basic needs—such as food, shelter, utilities, and child care—on one income.<sup>18</sup> The reason, in part, is due to Black workers being overrepresented in lower-paying jobs, such as retail sales, food service, and administrative work, and underrepresented in the higher-paying STEM occupations, such as computer science, architecture, engineering, and biotech.<sup>19</sup>



**Have lower household incomes and higher rates of poverty:** Weaker job opportunities translate into lower household incomes for Black families, and higher rates of economic hardship. The median household income of Black households in Washington state is nearly \$18,000 less than the state median, and nearly 60 percent of Black children are living in poverty, compared to 39 percent of children overall.<sup>20</sup>



**Less likely to own a home or have enough assets to weather a personal financial crisis or weak economy.** Fewer resources, especially given the high cost of living in Washington state, prevent Black families from accumulating the kinds of assets needed to build wealth, such as buying a home or saving for retirement. Just 35 percent of Black people live in households that own their homes compared to 65 percent of Washington households overall.<sup>21</sup> Nationally, 25 percent of Black households have enough assets to weather a personal financial crisis or weak economy, compared to 46 percent of households overall.<sup>22</sup>



**Lower median net worth.** Systemic barriers to building assets put current and future generations of Black Washingtonians at a significant disadvantage. With net worth 11 times less than the state average, they do not have the resources to achieve permanent economic security or pass down wealth from one generation to the next.<sup>23</sup>



# \$917

The median cost of child care per month for a family of three in Washington state takes up 27 percent of a Black family's income.

# 1 in 10

Just one in 10 teachers in Washington state is of color, even though four of every 10 students are of color.



# 2x

The rate at which Black students in Washington state are suspended or expelled compared to their peers.



# \$4.5 BILLION

The amount of additional resources needed to adequately fund K-12 education in Washington state.

# 25%

The share of a Black family's income needed to pay for average tuition at Washington state's four-year public universities.

## MAJOR OBSTACLES TO EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

For education to be the great equalizer many people perceive it to be, equal access to high-quality education—across early learning, K-12, and higher education—is a precondition. In practice, today's education system falls short of providing equal opportunity for Black students.

**The high cost of early learning opportunities.** High-quality early learning experiences, such as those provided in child care settings, are essential for development and help prepare children to be successful in school. The cost of child care, however, is prohibitive for many families in Washington state. Child care for a family of three can cost up to 18 percent of monthly household income; for a Black family of three it can consume up to 27 percent of income, given their generally lower earnings.<sup>26</sup>

**Inadequate state funding for K-12.** In 2012, the Washington State Supreme Court ruled in *McCleary v. State of Washington* that the state is not fulfilling its paramount duty under the state constitution to fund basic K-12 education. The court recognized that funding for schools varies by geographic location, and that many schools rely too heavily on local taxes to make up for resources that should be provided by the state.<sup>27</sup> In its ruling, the Supreme Court gave the Legislature until 2018 to invest an additional \$4.5 billion into the K-12 system to meet its constitutional obligation.<sup>28</sup>

## MAKING PROGRESS ON EQUITY IN EDUCATION: KEY GAPS TO CLOSE

For the 80,000 Black children in Washington state public schools, difficulty finding affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities, lack of adequate school funding for K-12, disproportionate disciplinary action, a lack of teacher diversity, and the prohibitive cost of higher education combine to affect their achievement and attainment across the education pipeline, as well as their future opportunities in the labor market.

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### COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS, BLACK STUDENTS IN WASHINGTON STATE:

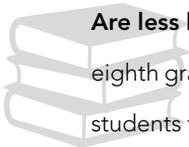
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**Have lower rates of preschool enrollment.** The cost of child care is likely just one reason why less than half (45 percent) of Black children are enrolled in preschool compared to their peers (53 percent).<sup>36</sup> Other reasons may include a shortage of child care availability in neighborhoods, lack of culturally competent child care, or differences in care preference by racial or ethnic background.



**Are slightly less likely to be prepared for kindergarten.** At 41 percent, the share of children ready for kindergarten in Washington state is low overall; Black kindergarteners are only slightly behind their peers, with 39 percent prepared in all six areas of kindergarten readiness.<sup>37</sup>



**Are less likely to meet standards in third grade reading and eighth grade math.** Proficiency in third grade reading and eighth grade math are key predictors of future success in school.<sup>38</sup> The achievement gap is evident by third grade, with Black students trailing their peers in reading proficiency by 15 percentage points. By eighth grade, Black students trail their peers in meeting math standards by 22 percentage points.<sup>39</sup>



**Are less likely to graduate from high school on-time.** Graduating from high school is an essential step in transitioning into adulthood. Sixty-five percent of Black students entering ninth grade graduate within four years, compared to 76 percent of students overall.<sup>40</sup>

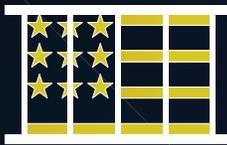


**Have similar rates of college enrollment after they graduate high school, but have lower degree completion rates.** Black high-school graduates have similar rates of college enrollment as their peers. However, colleges and universities in Washington state are less likely to retain Black students. For students entering college in 2005, for example, the rate of completion at public universities was 68 percent overall, but 52 percent for Black students.<sup>41</sup>



# #1

The United States incarcerates its population at a higher rate than anywhere else in the world, even though it has a marginal effect on reducing crime. The prison population in Washington state increased more than 300 percent between 1980 and 2011.



“THERE IS A PROBLEM IN [WASHINGTON STATE’S] CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ... PUT SIMPLY, WE HAVE FOUND DISPARITY AND MISTRUST. TOGETHER WE MUST FIX IT FOR THE SAKE OF OUR DEMOCRACY.”

*Task Force on Race in the Criminal Justice System*

# 18%

In Washington state, the share of Black people in prison (18 percent) is four times higher than their share in the state population.

## OBSTACLES TO EQUITY IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

If we want communities throughout Washington state to be places where people truly feel protected and trust local law enforcement, a deeper understanding of the disproportionate involvement of Black people in the criminal justice system is needed.

**A weak relationship between declining crime and rising incarceration.** The total crime rate in Washington state has been declining for the last two decades, decreasing from 60 per 1,000 people in 1994 to 40 per 1,000 people in 2013.<sup>63</sup> The violent crime rate has been declining as well, dropping by more than half (54 percent) during the same period.<sup>64</sup> Some policymakers have speculated that increases in incarceration are the major reason crime is declining, but the reality is more complicated. The impact of incarceration varies widely depending on the time frame and geographic location analyzed, suggesting other factors are largely at play.<sup>65</sup> For example, one study found that 25 percent of the drop in crime rates in the 1990s can be attributed to the increase in incarceration; the remainder is due to other factors, including the strong economy of the 1990s, the waning crack epidemic, and successful community-led efforts to address crime.<sup>66</sup> Given the extraordinary toll of incarceration on society generally, but for the Black community especially, a discussion of reversing trends in incarceration is needed.

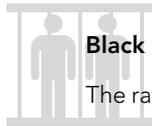
## MAKING PROGRESS ON EQUITY IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: KEY GAPS TO CLOSE

The collateral damage of mass incarceration affects the economic security, health, and civic engagement of entire communities. If current trends continue, one in three Black men and one in 18 Black women in the United States will spend some time in prison, removing a critical mass of workers, parents, brothers, sisters, friends, and voters from the Black community. Nearly two million children in the United States currently have a parent in prison, many of whom struggle to maintain relationships with their incarcerated parents, face more economic hardship than their peers, and struggle in school. Use of excessive force and violence in the Black community will only serve to further undermine trust between the community and law enforcement.

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### IN WASHINGTON STATE:

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**Black adults have a rate of incarceration five times higher than the state average.**

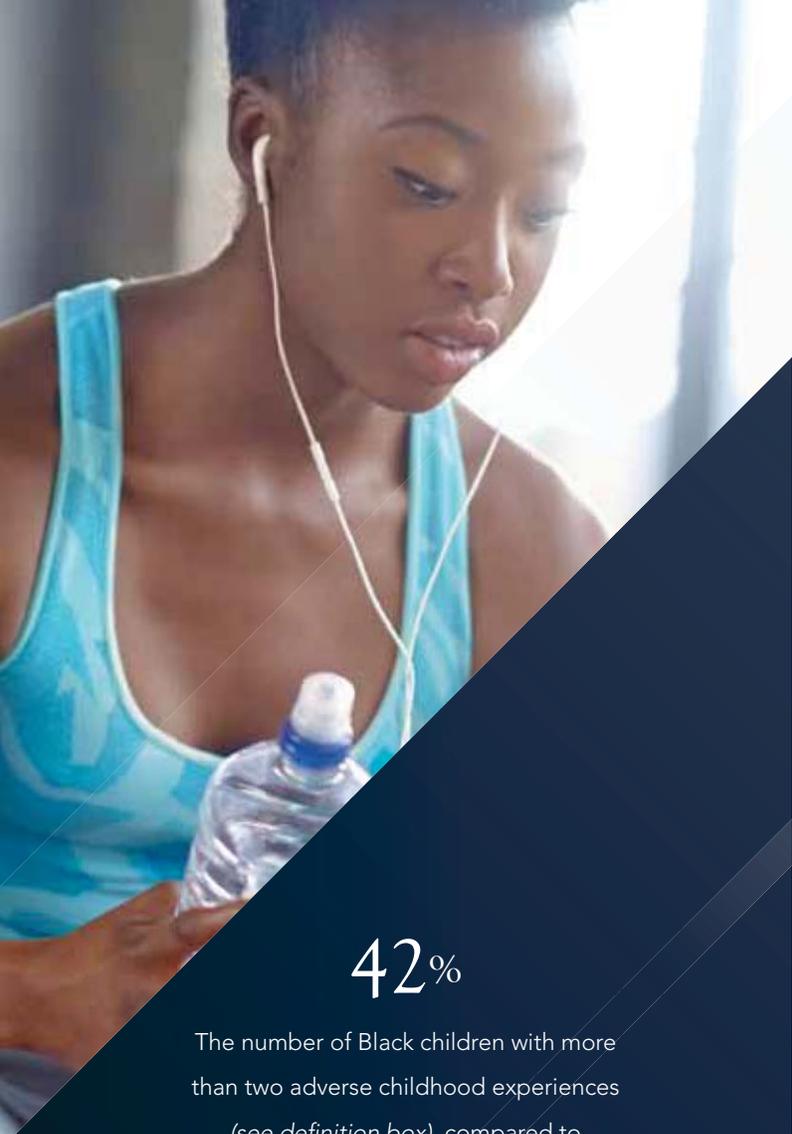
The rate of incarceration for Black adults is 33 per 1,000, compared to the statewide rate of six per 1,000.<sup>75</sup>



**Black children are detained at a rate four times higher than the state average.**

The rate of juvenile detention is four per 1,000 for Black children, compared to the state rate of one per 1,000.<sup>76</sup>





42%

The number of Black children with more than two adverse childhood experiences (see definition box), compared to 24 percent of children overall.

60%

The number of Black children living in families with economic hardship—the most common adverse experience children face—compared to the state average of 39 percent.



23%

The number of Black working-age (18 to 64) adults without health insurance, compared to the state average of 19 percent.

## MAJOR OBSTACLES TO EQUITY IN HEALTH

Improving the health and well-being of Black Washingtonians is largely dependent on how much progress we make on removing the social and economic barriers to opportunity they face, including:

**Adverse experiences and toxic stress.** A growing body of research suggests that stress resulting from adverse experiences in childhood (see table for definition) can harm the maturing brains of children and have health consequences that last well into adulthood. The more adversity a child experiences, the greater the risk for cardiovascular disease, lung and liver disease, depression, violence, smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, obesity, risky sexual behaviors, and early death.<sup>45</sup> Forty-two percent of Black children in Washington state have had two or more adverse experiences, compared to 24 percent of children overall.<sup>46</sup> Economic hardship is the most common adversity children face.<sup>47</sup> Black children and families in Washington state have a rate of economic hardship one-and-a-half times higher than the state average.<sup>48</sup>

## MAKING PROGRESS ON HEALTH EQUITY: KEY GAPS TO CLOSE

Social and economic inequality affects the health of many Black Washingtonians from birth onward, playing out across multiple dimensions of health and well-being.

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### COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS IN WASHINGTON STATE, BLACK PEOPLE:

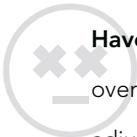
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**Are more likely to be born at low birth weight.** Babies born at a low weight (less than 5.5 pounds) are less likely to survive than babies born at a normal weight, and have a higher likelihood of experiencing a range of negative health outcomes in childhood and adulthood.<sup>54</sup> Eleven percent of Black babies are born at low birth weight, compared to six percent of all babies.<sup>55</sup>



**Have higher rates of childhood asthma and obesity.** Research suggests that the quality of the natural (e.g., air quality) and built environments (e.g., access to healthy food and parks, walkable neighborhoods, and housing quality) plays a major role in health outcomes. In Washington state, Black children have higher rates of both obesity and asthma than their peers,<sup>56</sup> two illnesses that are strongly linked to economic inequality and environmental factors.<sup>57</sup>



**Have higher rates of mortality and lower life expectancy.** Barriers to economic and education opportunities accumulate over time and are strongly associated with higher rates of illness and premature death in the Black community. Overall age-adjusted mortality among Black people (885 per 100,000) is significantly higher than the state rate (677 per 100,000).<sup>58</sup> A Black baby born in Washington state today has a life expectancy four years shorter (76) than the state average (80).<sup>59</sup>





## OBSTACLES TO EQUITY IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

For public policies and programs to truly reflect the needs of Black Washingtonians, barriers to civic engagement must be removed. In particular, policies that bolster the inclusion of Black people in politics and policymaking need to be a priority for policymakers.

### **Wealth inequality and the campaign finance system.**

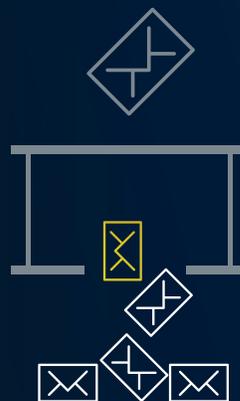
Nationally and in Washington state, the political system is increasingly dominated by wealthy people and corporations, whose interests differ considerably from those of average Americans. Wealthy people, for example, tend to favor policies that will increase their wealth—like lower taxes on capital gains and tax breaks for corporations—and are less likely to favor policies that support the middle class, like adequately funding K-12 education, public transportation, and affordable health care.<sup>81</sup> As a result, the overwhelming influence of money in politics fuels greater inequality and undermines the very premise of a well-functioning democracy—equal representation.

For Black people, whose median net worth (\$6,314) is far below the median for the United States as a whole (\$68,828),<sup>82</sup> and minuscule compared to the net worth of most wealthy people and corporations, the obstacles to equal political participation are virtually insurmountable. The wealth gaps for Black people are rooted in systemic barriers to economic and education opportunities that should be removed to improve overall conditions for the Black community. But removing those barriers alone will not elevate Black representation in politics and policymaking until the laws that allow wealth to dominate United States and state politics are reformed.

**Voter disenfranchisement.** A person convicted of a felony in Washington state who is currently serving time in a correctional facility, or is on parole or probation, is unable to vote. The disproportional impact of the War on Drugs on the Black community has disenfranchised a greater share of Black voters with a felony record—four percent compared to just one percent of felons overall.<sup>83</sup>

# 11x

The median net worth of the average U.S. household is 11 times greater (\$68,828) than the average Black household (\$6,314). In a political system so heavily influenced by wealth, it is nearly impossible to ensure equal representation for a strong democracy.



# 4:1

Four percent of Black people with a felony have lost their right to vote, compared to an average of one percent for the felon population as a whole.



# NINE

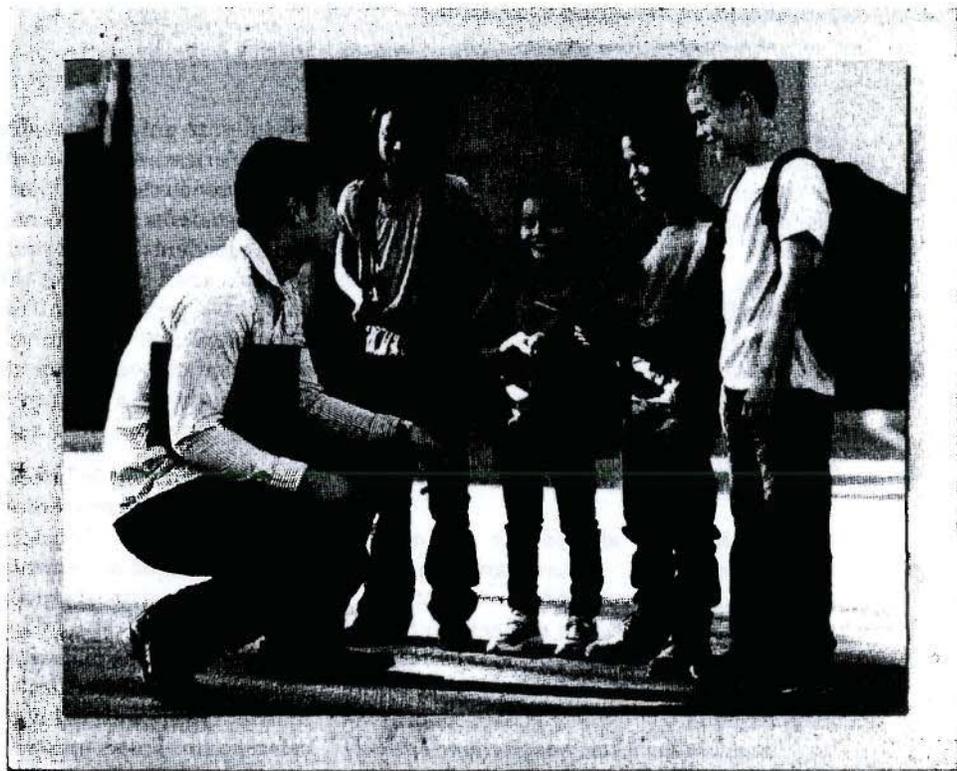
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- 21 Budget and Policy Center analysis of 2008–2012 American Community Survey data
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20  
15 | BLACK WELL-BEING & BEYOND



# Using a Racial Equity Impact Analysis in the Minneapolis Public Schools

By Jermaine Toney and Terry Keleher

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Prompted by a community-based alliance called the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative, the Minneapolis Board of Education agreed, in 2008, to use a racial impact assessment to inform decision making related to its Changing School Options initiative.<sup>1</sup> The initiative was a school board proposal to cut school district operating costs by reorganizing school enrollment and transportation routes. The school board's use of the community-driven "Race, Cultural and Economic Equity Impact Assessment" resulted in the selection of a plan that mitigated any adverse impact on communities of color.<sup>2</sup>

## The Minneapolis School Board Equity Impact Assessment

The Minneapolis Board of Education sought, in spring 2008, the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative's support for a proposed \$60 million school funding referendum on the November 2008 ballot.<sup>3</sup> The collaborative, being a multiracial and

<sup>1</sup>For an in-depth discussion of racial impact statements and their uses in advocacy, see William Kennedy et al., *Putting Race Back on the Table: Racial Impact Statements*, in this issue.

<sup>2</sup>Minneapolis Public Schools, *Race, Cultural and Economic Equity Impact Assessment of Changing School Options* (2009) ((1) Minneapolis Public Schools, *Changing School Options Revised Plan and Variations: Pre-reading for 7/14 Board Work Session*; (2) Minneapolis Public Schools, *Changing School Options Revised Plan and Variations: Appendix to Pre-reading for 7/14 Board Work Session*; and (3) Minneapolis Public Schools, *Changing School Options, Revised Plans and Variations, Appendix B, Attendance Boundary Maps*) (all on file with Jermaine Toney).

<sup>3</sup>See Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Education Equity Organizing Collaborative (n.d.), <http://bit.ly/1bxR6PV>.

multicultural alliance of community organizations advocating equity in public schools, was seen as a civic player. The collaborative's partners at the time included Migizi Communications (an American Indian organization), Somali Action Alliance, Isaiah (a multiracial faith-based coalition), the Coalition of Black Churches, and the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (which supports community organizers and racial justice advocacy and convened and staffed the collaborative).

The collaborative advised the school board that a racial, cultural, and economic impact analysis of how students of color, American Indian students, and other schoolchildren would be affected by approval of the referendum would have to be done before the collaborative could support the referendum. The collaborative commissioned the Organizing Apprenticeship Project to conduct the racial impact analysis because the project had analyzed the racial impact of state legislative and budgetary proposals.<sup>4</sup> The project had, in turn, received training and consulting from our Applied Research Center, a national racial justice think tank and promoter of equity tools such as legislative report cards on racial equity and racial impact assessments.

The school district's enrollment for the 2008–2009 school year was 40 percent African American, 30 percent white, 17 percent Latino, 9 percent Asian, and 4.5 percent American Indian.<sup>5</sup> Even though students of color constituted 70 percent of total enrollment in the district, there was a wide gap in reading proficiency test scores between students of color and white students.<sup>6</sup> In the 2006–2007

school year only 31 percent of the district's African American students were proficient in reading, while 35 percent of Latino students, 33 percent of American Indian students, and 43 percent of Asian students were proficient in reading. In comparison, 82 percent of white students were proficient in reading.<sup>7</sup> Only 32 percent of low-income students, that is, those who received a free or reduced lunch, were proficient in reading.<sup>8</sup>

The Organizing Apprenticeship Project's racial impact analysis revealed that if voters failed to support additional school funding, the academic achievement gap across different racial groups would widen.<sup>9</sup> Voter approval of the referendum would result in the maintenance, but not expansion, of disparities. The collaborative actively and visibly supported the referendum. Voters approved the referendum by a historic margin, with significant support from voters of color.

That same year the Minneapolis Board of Education again sought support from the collaborative, this time for the Changing School Options initiative, a proposal to save operating costs by reorganizing services. The initiative offered three options to solve the fiscal difficulties brought about by declining student enrollment and rising transportation costs: school closures, rewired pathways in school enrollment options, and changed school transportation routes.

This time the collaborative asked the Minneapolis School Board to conduct an equity impact assessment of the initiative's proposed options. The collaborative supplied an assessment framework: the Pocket Guide to Budget Proposals: Racial and Economic Equity Assessment

<sup>4</sup>See Kennedy et al., *supra* note 1 (discussing Organizing Apprenticeship Project type of racial impact statement and how it has been used elsewhere).

<sup>5</sup>Minneapolis Public Schools, Summary Statistics: Racial/Ethnic Breakdown from 1978–2009 (Dec. 28, 2009), <http://bit.ly/169zc3M>.

<sup>6</sup>Dave Heistad, Research, Evaluation and Assessment, Minneapolis Public Schools, Achievement Gap Trends (n.d.), <http://bit.ly/18FWqCn>.

<sup>7</sup>*Id.* at 7.

<sup>8</sup>Research, Evaluation Assessment Department, Minneapolis Public Schools, Spring 2010 MCA-II and MTELL District Summary Results 5 (July 1, 2010), <http://bit.ly/17czk00>.

<sup>9</sup>Jermaine Toney, Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Weighing the Racial Equity Impacts of [Minneapolis] Schools Referendum (Sept. 30, 2008), <http://bit.ly/15QJa86>.

Questions.<sup>10</sup> The Organizing Apprenticeship Project previously used and shared the Pocket Guide with state lawmakers to assess the racial impact of state budget proposals.

The Pocket Guide has five assessment questions:

1. How does the proposed action (policy, budget, or investment decision) impact racial and economic disparities in Minnesota?
2. How does the proposed action support and advance racial and economic equity in such areas as education, contracting, immigrant and refugee access to services, health, workforce and economic development?
3. Have voices of groups affected by the proposal, budget, or investment decision been involved with its development? What solutions were proposed by these groups and communities?
4. What do you need to ensure that proposals are successful in addressing disparities—what resources, what timelines, and what monitoring will help ensure success for achieving racial and economic equity?
5. If your assessment shows that a proposed policy, budget, or investment decision will likely increase disparities, what alternatives can you explore? What modifications are needed to maximize racial and economic equity outcomes and reduce racial and economic disparities?<sup>11</sup>

The board voted unanimously to authorize the district staff to use the assess-

ment. The board was eager to know how the proposed changes would affect their constituents. The assessment also gave the board an opportunity to ensure that the initiative's benefits or harms would be evenly distributed across different racial groups.

Though initially reluctant to conduct the analysis, the school administration eventually created an interdepartmental team and secured a contractor to help in the research, analysis, and writing of the assessment. Some team members saw a gap between what the collaborative was requesting and what data the school could realistically compile for the assessment. The school board member assigned to coordinate the analysis convened a face-to-face meeting with key board members and the working team. They all began to see an accurate way to model the impact of the changes by using high research standards.

The collaborative wanted to ensure that community organizations had access to accurate information. But some members of the school staff research team feared public scrutiny and critique of the school's racial impact analysis. Again, face-to-face meetings between collaborative leaders and the staff team helped diffuse this tension. The meetings revealed a shared commitment to equity and an agreement to use data to bring out the truth in order to allow the board to choose an implementation plan that would prevent disparities. This partnership opened a path for a doable and useful analysis.

The main task in using the assessment tool was to pull together data to see how each identified option for implementing the initiative would have an impact on different students and communities. The district team gathered data on student enrollment differences by resident zone; the team paid close attention to the proportion of students of color, English language learners, enrollment trends over

<sup>10</sup>Jermaine Toney, Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Pocket Guide to Budget Proposals: Racial and Economic Equity Assessment Questions (March 18, 2009), <http://bit.ly/1ak9gTZ>.

<sup>11</sup>*Id.*

the last five years for kindergarten and certain grades, and attrition within the public schools. The team also analyzed by resident zone the number of magnet programs, the proposed school closures, the programs proposed to be closed, the number of students who would and would not have to change schools. And the team looked at the cost savings of each option and the number and racial percentages of students who would be disrupted, that is, students who would have to change schools.

The district's racial equity analysis revealed that Plan A, which established solid school boundaries, saved the district \$8.5 million while potentially disrupting 9,200 students. The plan disrupted 39 percent of students of color compared to 52 percent of white students. Plan B, which rebalanced zone capacity, saved a little less than Plan A, \$8.2 million, while disrupting only 8,550 students. Under this plan, 43 percent of students of color were disrupted compared to 33 percent of white students. Plan C, which minimized disruption, had the largest savings, \$9 million, and disrupted the fewest: 4,920 students. Plan C caused the disruption of 22 percent of students of color compared to 25 percent of white students.<sup>12</sup> Plan C was clearly the best plan for all kids facing disruption—students of color, English language learners, low-income students, and white students. Still, this final option meant that major schools serving Somali students would be closed while many American Indian students would be forced to change schools.

Because the equity analysis broke down the data by race and culture, each community was able to see how the school initiative's options would have an impact on it. American Indians constituted only 5 percent of the district's student population, but 26 percent of those students would have been adversely affected by the plan. The Somali community would have been adversely affected by the proposed

closure of two schools; the Somalis' access to an anchor school critical to their community would have been affected.

The school district, with an accurate picture of the potential racial effects of the different options, now had an opportunity to make appropriate changes in the school district's proposals and to engage direct stakeholders in collective problem solving.

The district, in consultation with American Indian leaders, tackled the disproportionate adverse impact on the American Indian community by taking a flexible approach to the proposed new boundaries. For example, an American Indian parent whose child's school would now be outside the new boundary could choose to keep the child at the old school or send the child to a school within the new boundary. This flexibility allowed for more parent choice and gave the community the chance to preserve community cohesion. According to one leader,

this almost never happens. Normally, the parent has to follow what the new rules of the game are. This time, the policy was not so arbitrarily implemented because it had the flexibility to take on parent choice. This approach was more empowering for the parents and American Indian community in general. The American Indian community is used to being victimized by policy. This choice flipped that script on its head.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, communication between the school district and Somali Action Alliance resulted in maintaining an elementary school that fed into a middle school with a solid performance record and reputation for educating Somali students at this critical developmental age. Without the impact analysis, the feeder school would have likely been closed.

<sup>12</sup>Minneapolis Public Schools, Changing School Options Revised Plan and Variations: Pre-reading for 7/14 Board Work Session, *supra* note 2, PowerPoint slide 14. This document has Plans A, B4, and D. We changed the name of Plan B4 to Plan B, and Plan D to Plan C, for simplicity.

<sup>13</sup>Telephone Interview by Jermaine Toney with Elaine Salinas, President, Migizi Communications (Jan. 19, 2012).

The difference that the racial impact assessment made—affording community participation and a better solution—was significant for thousands of families and schoolchildren. According to a school board member,

had the district not done the Equity Impact Analysis, we would not have known the upcoming impacts. In general, it is just good practice to be aware of the impact of a district's decisions—to see and think about impact of decisions. This has to be more of a discipline, not a onetime thing. It has to be embedded in all the work—part of operating as a school district. Not just responding to a community group request but it has to be part of how the district does business.<sup>14</sup>

### Lessons Learned

The Minneapolis Public Schools' experience in developing an equity impact assessment with community participation has much to teach us. We advocates who plan to do equity assessments should keep in mind five points.

1. **Stakeholder engagement from the outset of planning and decision making is critical.** Those most affected by the proposals at issue must be actively and authentically engaged in decision making. In Minneapolis parents were able to exert influence and shape how they would be affected *before* decisions were made rather than *after* the fact.
2. **Multiracial alliances and analyses are needed.** Communities coming together across racial and cultural lines can be powerful in driving change. Instead of competing racial lines, a multiracial and multiethnic approach to analysis and decision making can generate solutions that benefit people across all races, espe-

cially racial groups that are currently or potentially most disadvantaged.

3. **School district and community collaboration is well worth the investment.** Face-to-face meetings and the development of understanding, trust, and a working partnership pay off in producing better solutions. Collectively partners bring more perspectives, knowledge, and expertise to creating workable and equitable solutions.
4. **The use of race equity research tools is critical to success.** Having concrete frameworks and guides for conducting racial equity impact assessments helps ensure that questions are considered thoughtfully and systematically. Racial equity tools are most effective when they are part of an ongoing broader institutionwide and communitywide strategy for achieving equitable outcomes.<sup>15</sup>
5. **Equity impact assessments need to be institutionalized.** Building the use of equity tools into standard protocols can help support and sustain success so that their use is not simply dependent on the goodwill of individuals. Institutions and organizations committed to providing high-quality service to all people can explore ways to integrate racial equity tools at multiple decision-making points, and by multiple decision makers, in order to advance systemwide benefits: "We must be vigilant around equity issues. The system will act like the system, going right back to old behavior real quickly. This is why we must have campaigns, but also we must have policies that institutionalize equity."<sup>16</sup>

Our civil rights legal framework has a strong focus on remedying problems once they have occurred. And, increasingly, lawmakers and jurists are taking a "color-blind" approach to creating and interpreting laws. Yet many laws

<sup>14</sup>Telephone interview by Jermaine Toney with Jill Stever-Zeitlin, Minneapolis School Board Member (Jan. 9, 2012).

<sup>15</sup>See Kennedy et al., *supra* note 1.

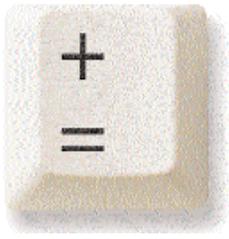
<sup>16</sup>Salinas, *supra* note 13.

that are *facially* neutral—silent on race—in their intent, are not *racially* neutral in their impact: racial equity impact assessments—while still needing further refinement and wider application—provide a proactive, participatory, and prospective approach to racial equity efforts. If developed collectively and implemented effectively, they can actually prevent ra-

cial disparities from occurring in the first place. Replacing color blindness with “equity-mindedness”—the conscious and collective consideration of racial impact during decision making—offers hope that we can affirmatively counteract racial bias and advance racial equity and social inclusion.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Kennedy et al., *supra* note 1.



# Reasons for Hope:

## You Can Challenge Educational Inequities

*Inequity in education has many causes and correlates, but one important element is often left out. Racism is hard to discuss and its devastating effects hard to understand, but there are ways to begin the conversation and start the healing.*

BY JULIAN WEISSGLASS

I usually start my workshops on educational equity by asking educators how they would explain the achievement gap between different racial and socio-economic groups if they were invited to make a statement to their school board. Their explanations span an array of categories: family conditions, peer culture, poverty, curriculum, pedagogy, cultural differences, teachers' expectations, unequal access to resources, lack of role models, and language differences. Although their list illustrates the complexity of the situation and its emotional nature, very few of the thousands of educators to whom I have asked this question have specifically mentioned racism or classism.

Their reluctance to include race does not surprise me. Race and class are two of the most controversial issues facing U.S. society and are usually neglected in educational forums. A Latina teacher (in a district with 85% students of color) wrote at the end of an institute I led, "I've never had the opportunity to talk about this issue [racism] with

other people of different cultural groups than mine.... It has been very encouraging to see that it is possible to address these issues in a sensitive and respectful manner."

### A Proposal

Because these topics deserve and require considerably more attention than they traditionally command, I propose that educators establish programs to:

- Increase people's understanding of how race and class bias—personal and institutionalized, conscious and unconscious, blatant and subtle—operate in schools and society to impede student learning
- Identify practices and policies that interfere with the learning of students of color and of students from low-income households and replace them with effective ones.

Reasons for hope that inequity, racism, and the achievement gap will be eliminated exist, and there are some practical steps for carrying out such a program. They are not simple actions, however, and they demand commitment and



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dedication to be successful. Before any actions are taken, I suggest two guidelines to help principals begin the task of examining these issues in their schools:

**A.** Resist trying to solve specific school problems until you have created shared meaning and increased trust. Even if you believe that you have a collegial atmosphere, unless you have given members of the school community the opportunity to talk with one another about how they have been affected by different forms of prejudice, “problem-solving discussions” often become unproductive, confrontational, or confused by posturing and pretense.

**B.** Avoid conducting major projects, such as schoolwide “celebrating diversity” events, until the steps are taken to establish trust. Although such events may cause people to feel good temporarily and appear to be successful, they may be counter-productive in the long run if no substantial progress is made toward building trust among members of different ethnic or class groups and increasing understanding of how racism or classism affects teaching and learning.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Start by discussing definitions to create shared meanings of the terms that people use or at least a shared understanding of what they disagree about.** It is important, for example, that we know what other people mean when they use the terms *racism* or *sexism* or *classism*. Because of space constraints, I will focus on racism in this article, but the implications for addressing these other issues should be clear. I use the following definition of racism:

Racism is the systematic mistreatment of certain groups of people (often referred to as people of color) on the basis of skin color or other (real or supposed) physical characteristics. This mistreatment is carried out by societal institutions or by White people who have been conditioned by the society to act, consciously or unconsciously, in harmful ways toward people of color, with the mistreatment condoned or colluded in by the society as a whole. [*Author’s note:* The terms used to describe different racial groups are themselves controversial. This is inevitable since humans form one race, and racial terms are social, not biological, classifications. Any label is inadequate and a gross simplification. Because skin color is the basis of racism, I will use “people of color” as a term for darker skinned people residing in the United States whose origins are outside Europe. I will use White or European Americans for U.S. residents whose ancestors came from Europe. I know there is no such thing as a white-skinned person, that some European

Americans are darker-skinned than some people from outside Europe, and that there are many people of mixed heritage.]

Racism is different than prejudice. Although a person of color can be prejudiced toward and hurt a White person, people of color face systematic and ongoing personal and institutionalized biases every day in this country. Shirley Chisholm, the first Black U.S. congresswoman wrote: “Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal” (1970). Because schools are the primary formal societal institution that young people encounter, they have enormous responsibility in combating racism. What schools do—or don’t do—significantly affects the future of their students and of our society.

Racism can be subtle or blatant, conscious or unconscious, personal or institutionalized. Unconscious personal bias occurs, for example, when teachers have low expectations of Black or Latino students and interact with them less thoughtfully and less often than they do with White students. Institutionalized racism includes:

- The incorporation into institutional policies or practices of attitudes and values that work to the disadvantage of students of color (for example, tracking practices that consign many students of color to low tracks with less-experienced teachers from which they can seldom escape)
- The unquestioned acceptance by the institution of White middle-class values (for example, rewarding facility in taking tests or the absence of authors of color in many secondary school English curricula)

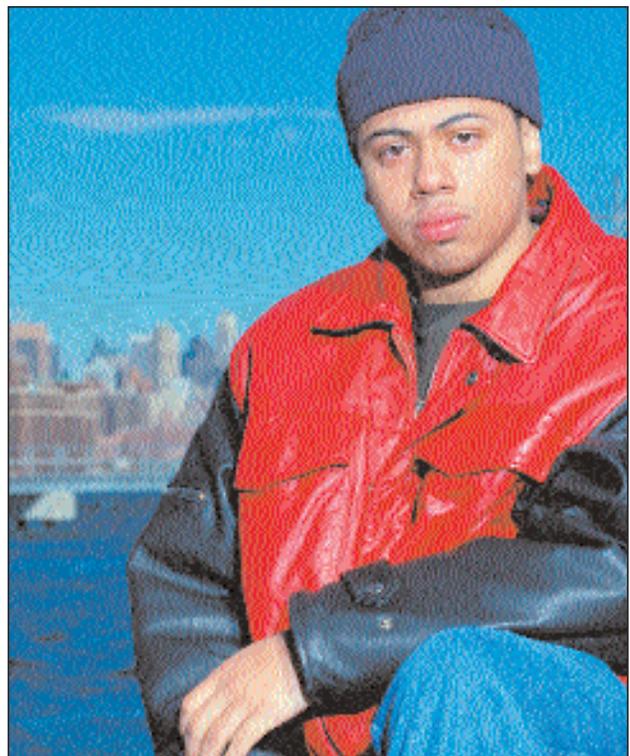


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Figure 1

## Perspectives On Equity

1. No one is born prejudiced. All forms of bias, from extreme bigotry to unaware cultural biases, are acquired—actually imposed on the young person.
2. We are one species. All humans are very much alike biologically.
3. In many societies, many of the assumptions, values, and practices of people and institutions from the dominant culture serve to the disadvantage of students from the nondominant culture.
4. Individual prejudice and institutionalized biases are dysfunctional for individuals and to the society as a whole.
5. Systematic mistreatment (such as racism, classism, or sexism) is more than the sum of individual prejudices. Thoughtful action with regard to curriculum, pedagogy, and school policies and organization is necessary to overcome the effects on people and institutions of a long history of prejudice and discrimination.
6. Individuals and groups internalize and transfer the systematic mistreatment. They often act harmfully toward themselves and each other. This process must be identified and eliminated.
7. Educators are an important force in helping many people overcome the effects of societal bias and discrimination, but schools also serve to perpetuate the inequalities and prejudices in society.
8. Race, class, and gender bias are serious issues facing U.S. society and education that are usually not discussed. Talking about them is necessary, not to lay blame, but to figure out better ways of educating our children.
9. Lack of acceptance and support is an impediment to the development of educational leadership among people of color, women, and the working class.
10. To make progress on this very complex problem, it will be necessary to improve alliances between educators from different ethnic and racial groups, between males and females, and between people of different class backgrounds.
11. Discussing and gaining new understandings about the existence and effects of bias and discrimination will usually be accompanied by strong emotions.
12. Changed attitudes and actions will be facilitated if we are listened to attentively and allowed to release our emotions as we attempt to make sense of our experiences and the experiences of others.

- Schools' passiveness in the face of prejudiced behavior that interferes with student learning or well-being (for example, not addressing harassment or teasing or meeting it with punishment instead of attempting to build communication and understanding).



### ASSUMPTIONS

**Provide opportunities for people (including yourself) to reflect on and talk about their assumptions about different dimensions of equity.** The National Coalition for Equity in Education has developed 12 assumptions, called *Perspectives on Equity*, to guide our work [see figure 1]. People at our workshops talk about whether they agree with these assumptions, what they would add, and what the implications are for their work if the assumptions are true. We do not seek agreement on the perspectives, although I emphasize the importance of accepting, at least as a working hypothesis, that no one is born prejudiced. It is important that people think and talk about their assumptions related to the issues raised in the *Perspectives on Equity*. Educators can also read and discuss personal stories that have been transcribed to illustrate the various perspectives. For example, the story in figure 2 is used to encourage discussion of Perspective 4.

### THE HISTORY AND NATURE OF RACISM

**Provide opportunities for students and adults to learn about the history and nature of the oppression that people of color have endured.** Schools rarely teach in depth about the genocide of indigenous peoples, the kidnapping and slavery of Africans, the seizure of the Southwest U.S. territory from Mexico, the mistreatment of Chinese immigrants and citizens, the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the practices of segregation and discrimination. Students are often told falsehoods. For example, the authors of *The Connected Mathematics Project*, a popular eighth-grade mathematics text, in an attempt to situate an algebra lesson in a historical situation, wrote, "When Mexico ceded California to the United States in 1848, California was a relatively unexplored territory with only a few thousand people." In fact, anthropologists estimate that there were approximately 150,000 indigenous people in California at that time. Furthermore, to say that "Mexico ceded California to the United States" without mentioning that the U.S. military was threatening to conquer the whole country is akin to saying that in the 17th century, large numbers of Africans came to North America to help grow cotton without mentioning slavery.

A lack of knowledge is a large part of the problem. Most educators do not know very much about the eugenics movement and how its theories of White superiority influenced

education. For example, Carl Brigham, who as secretary of the College Entrance Examination Board developed the Scholastic Aptitude Test (now called the SAT), wrote in *A Study of American Intelligence*, “The decline of American intelligence will be more rapid than the decline of the intelligence of European national groups owing to the presence here of the Negro” (1923). Educational Testing Services, the organization that produces and sells the SAT, has a library named after Brigham. (See Tucker, 1994, and Gould, 1981 for more discussion of the eugenics movement.)

And Brigham was not an isolated fanatic. The eugenics movement included prominent citizens; psychologists, such as Lewis Terman, one of the primary developers of the Stanford Binet IQ test; and educators and geneticists from leading American universities. For example, Edward East (1929), a Harvard geneticist, wrote, “Gene packets of African origin are not valuable supplements to the gene packets of European origin; it is the white germ plasm that counts” (p. 199). The standardized tests that we currently use were originally developed on the basis of the theories and assumptions of men who believed in the superiority of certain racial, national, and social groups and attempted to influence governmental and educational policies. Although the eugenics movement in this country fell into disrepute after the Nazis took the belief of racial superiority to a horrific conclusion in the 1940s, many people’s expectations and attitudes toward people of color are still influenced by these discredited theories. The ideas persist, often in subtler and more sophisticated forms. For example, as late as 1994, Murray & Herrnstein stated in *The Bell Curve*, “Putting it

all together, success and failure in the American economy and all that goes with it, are increasingly a matter of the genes that people inherit” (p. 91).

Let me be clear that the eugenics movement was based on untruths. Human beings are one species. We are much more alike than we are different. Each human being is valuable beyond measure. Each deserves to be treated with complete respect—regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, or physical appearance.

Therefore, it is not surprising that European Americans do not always understand the feelings of Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, or Asian Americans because they do not understand how the long history of racism has affected people of color.

#### SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITIES

**Work toward having people view your school as a community that embraces the idea of the opportunity to understand racism and other forms of systematic mistreatment and to heal from the hurts they cause.**

Good intentions, commitment, and even hard work are not sufficient for eliminating racism in schools. Neither will excellent curricula and pedagogy be enough to eradicate the achievement gap. We need communities where White people can listen to people of color talk about how they and their ancestors have experienced racism and where people of color can listen to White people talk about how they have seen racial prejudice in operation and how it affected them. Listening to each other’s stories and emotions helps people identify what needs to change within their institutions and within themselves. Being listened to helps us heal. Professional therapists are not necessary for this, nor are there enough of them to do the job. It is our responsibility—and our opportunity—as educators to do this work. In my professional development workshops, I use dyads, support groups, and personal experience panels (Weissglass, 1997) to build community and promote healing. In these structures, people divide time equally and receive attention for their thoughts and feelings. Listeners do not give advice or interpretation and emotional release is accepted. Confidentiality is maintained. People do not complain about the listeners or mutual acquaintances (Weissglass, 1990; 2000).

A school community in which people have the necessary support to heal from how they’ve been hurt is quite different than a typical school and deserves an explanation. Human beings experience considerable hurt (physical and emotional) when they are young—from accidents and from mistreatment or neglect by other young people, adults, or institutions. Although as adults we may have forgotten many of those experiences, they still affect us. People who are

Figure 2

#### I JUST GAVE IN

I grew up in a city and lived in a very Italian American community, which also had a pretty high minority percentage of African Americans.... My school was primarily children of Italian American and African American background. When I was about seven, I made friends with a girl in my class, who was African American. I brought her home one day. We were there playing for awhile, and I gave her something to drink. After she left, my mother threw the glass away. (crying) She couldn't explain to me (pause, crying).... Other things I will forgive her for, but that I won't. She said I couldn't play with her anymore. And I guess I just gave in. I was young and didn't know what to do. She tried to say that these people lived in these projects and they had diseases. She went on and on about this kind of stuff.... It just didn't make sense to me. She was a nice child, she didn't seem any different from me. I was poor too....

It's to the point now that there are things I won't talk to my family about. We don't talk about any deep issues because we can't talk about them without getting into arguments. If I see my family once a year, that's probably the most I will see them. I live across the country from them and that's not an accident.

*Excerpt from a White female college professor talking on a Personal Experience Panel.*

“feeling bad” as a result of earlier experiences sometimes act in ways that are harmful to others. They may make misguided attempts to feel better by bonding with a group (informal or organized) that discriminates against (or even actively harasses) other people. They may exclude or marginalize others or act in patronizing or condescending ways. It is obvious to most people that it is hurtful to be the target of racism (or any form of bias); it is less obvious that any biased stance (thoughts, beliefs, actions) limits an individual’s learning, relationships, and emotional health.

When young people see or hear about injustice in the world, they often feel fear, confusion, or grief even when they are not the targets. If they question injustice, they are often ignored, ridiculed, or humiliated by adults who say such things as “I don’t have time to talk about that now,” “This is just a phase you’re going through,” or “You are so naive.” These hurtful experiences perpetuate racism. We can heal from these experiences, but it requires the release of the ensuing painful emotions through the natural physiological processes of talking, laughing, trembling, perspiring, “tantrumming,” yawning, and crying. (I learned about emotional release from reevaluation counseling. See Jackins, [1965] for an introduction to the theory of reevaluation counseling.)

Unfortunately, our society does not allow people to heal sufficiently in this way. Boys are told, “Big boys don’t cry.” Children are sent to their room or given sweets or other inducements to stop them from crying. Expressing frustration or anger is stifled. Showing fear is often greeted with derision or taunts—“Don’t be a sissy.” The net result is that most adults do not have full access to the natural physiological processes of emotional release with which they were born.

Building and sustaining communities committed to healing from the hurts of racism, however, will be challenging.

Figure 3

**BEING DARK WAS A PROBLEM**

I was taught very early that being dark was a problem in my family because we had very light people. And we talked about skin color—that that [light color] was an advantage. And I was told by my grandparents that if my mom hadn’t married my black dad, I would have been light like my beautiful cousins. And probably would have been able to have good hair like them. And so, that preference and that superiority that I saw among my lighter complexion relatives was one. And then class was part of that because so many [of our family] were middle class. And I got direct instruction that “if you want to make it in the white world, you’re going to have to be twice as good. But, it’s too bad you’re dark. But, you can overcome that if you’re smart. And say your words right”—and all of that.... I now know that I was giving away a whole lot of myself to fit in and that I was disconnecting from how I felt and who I was.

*Excerpt from an African American educator (former principal) talking on a Personal Experience Panel.*

The culture of schools does not respect emotional release. (See Weissglass, 1990, for a discussion of possible reasons.)

It is easier for educators to have a one-day workshop celebrating diversity, to develop new curriculum, or to write mission statements than to talk about personal experiences with racism. Politicians prefer to talk in the abstract about the achievement gap, to blame teachers, or pressure students rather than to enable schools to deal with racism in meaningful and productive ways.

Internal and Transferred Racism

**Understand internalized racism and transferred racism and intervene and undo the hurts from these phenomena.**

I use the terms *internalized racism* and *transferred racism* to refer to the processes of people believing and acting on the negative messages they receive about themselves (internalized) and their group (transferred). Internalized racism causes some people of color to believe that they are not as intelligent or as worthwhile as White people. And it seems to impede their academic functioning. (Figures 3 and 4 are used to help people understand internalized and transferred racism.) Research on test taking shows that the performance of members of nearly any stereotyped group can be negatively affected by manipulating the conditions of the environment to bring to consciousness or subconsciousness one’s membership in that group (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Internalized and transferred racism occur when people are hurt and not allowed to heal through emotional release. As a result, they are pulled to reenact the hurt on someone else. Because people of color have rarely been able to act out their hurt on White people, they tend to act it out on family members and other people of color. The hurts tend to get passed on from generation to generation. Giving encouragement, setting high expectations, interrupting put-downs, helping students build caring relationships, and instilling self-confidence help students contradict the effects of internalized and transferred oppression. Teachers and schools who have closed the achievement gap for Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans have undoubtedly made progress in helping students overcome or heal from the effects of internalized racism.

**Leadership Is Necessary**

There is substantial resistance to addressing racism. White people may not recognize racism, and if they do, they may avoid confronting their own or other peoples’ prejudices—or even talking honestly about them. They may deny that racism affects them or institutional policies. They may be fearful of discussing racial issues with people of color. People of color may feel hopeless or cynical about the possibility of change. They may be skeptical of White people making a commitment to combat racism. If they have been academically or financially successful, they may contend that racism is no longer a factor

Figure 4

## I ALWAYS FELT INADEQUATE

It happened slowly and you know what's going on but you can't understand it...like the SRA, the reading classes...there's different colors [for different levels]. I was always in the lower one. I was treated a little bit different again because I was in this lower group and I started noticing a lot of my buddies were in the same group I was in and a lot of the other kids that were usually quiet were in the higher groups and you start kind of feeling a little bit less. You start feeling less about yourself...as I went into high school, they have the tracks A, B, and C. And C is just one step above special ed. And again, I was in the C group and my buddies were in the C group with me. You know...people treat you differently. As I got into college I always felt inadequate, not being capable to do these things.

*Excerpt from a Latino principal talking on a Personal Experience Panel.*

in current society. Leaders for educational equity will need to understand the personal, social, and institutional roots of inequities and have healed themselves from some of the hurts that a racist society imposed on them. They will need to understand how racism works in schools, be able to raise controversial issues while building unity, relate well with people from diverse backgrounds, and help people deal constructively with their own and others' emotions about inequities. They will be able to help people recover from feelings of passivity, hopelessness, and powerlessness. Leaders will require exceptional commitment, understanding, persistence, and sensitivity.

### Reasons for Hope

Any reform effort attempting to solve the inequities in education that does not help people heal from the hurts of growing up in a racist and classist society is not likely to succeed over time. But if schools develop communities where people can speak honestly and productively about racism and heal from their hurts, educators will be able to identify how their biases affect their students. They will challenge any attitudes of low expectations, communicate caring to students, and work with parents to help them support their children's learning. They will identify how racism and classism become institutionalized in policies and practices. They will question their curricula and pedagogy and work to make it more engaging to students from different cultures and socioeconomic classes. Educators and parents will regard the character, understanding, and values that a young person develops as more important than his or her test scores. Schools will teach the history of oppressed peoples and how they have been treated and support students of color and their families to challenge internalized and transferred racism. They will move beyond the celebration of diversity and create communities in which it is possible

for students to heal from how they experience unfairness and discrimination. As students recover from their hurts they will be more likely to achieve their full academic potential. Establishing a caring community of learners will increase true learning and reduce student alienation and violence.

The above ideas may seem to you to be an idealistic, even naive, view of what is possible. Growing up in a dysfunctional society causes many people to have limited views of what schools can be. People are good, however, born without prejudice, and very intelligent. There is good reason to be hopeful that we can enable people to heal from how they have been hurt and create equitable schools—and a better society. PL

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