



Urban League of
Greater Kansas City



CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY ENOUGH?

2021 STATE OF BLACK KANSAS CITY

2021 STATE OF BLACK KANSAS CITY CHARTING THE PATH FORWARD: **IS EQUITY ENOUGH?**



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Urban League of
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Published with support from:

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President and CEO

Urban League of Greater Kansas City



**CHARTING
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**IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?**



2020 was a turbulent year. George Floyd's homicide and the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the harmful impact of systemic racism in the lives of Black Americans. These cataclysmic events rocked the nation and the world. George Floyd's murder ignited global support for the Black Lives Matter movement, with people of all races and nationalities taking to the streets to protest police brutality. Simultaneously, the pandemic ravaged urban communities, disproportionately killing Blacks and Latinos.

As in most urban areas, the pandemic and police brutality continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of Blacks and Latinos in Kansas City. Black unemployment is high, violent crimes are on the rise, and community trust in law enforcement is low. Black-owned businesses are struggling to stay afloat, and many have shuttered their doors due to economic inequities that make it impossible for them to access much-needed capital.

Though much has changed, so much remains the same. Since we began calculating the Equality Index 15 years ago, Black progress has been slow and static. We progress in one area and regress in another. Our efforts to achieve equity in economics, education, health, social justice, and civic engagement are met with powerful forces of resistance that impede our ability to sustain forward movement, especially in the areas of economics and social justice.

In 2006, the economics index was 54%, meaning that Blacks were 46% shy of economic parity with Whites. The 2020 economics index is 62%. Black economic progress has improved only 8 percentage points in 15 years. It is important to note that growth has been static and not constant over the years. For example, our economics index increased from 54% in 2006 to 58% in 2008, and then decreased to 53% in 2010 before slowly rising to 62% in 2020.

The low economic index is emblematic of the persistent nature of the racial wealth gap between Blacks and Whites nationwide. At the current pace, how long will it take for Blacks



to achieve economic parity with Whites? The answer to this question can be found in *The Ever-Growing Gap*¹ published by the Institute for Policy Studies and the Corporation for Enterprise Development, which reports that if current trends continue, the average Black household will need 228 years to accumulate as much wealth as their White counterparts hold today. For the average Latino family, it will take 84 years. Absent significant policy interventions or a seismic change in the American economy, people of color will never close the gap.²

In 2006, the social justice index was 65%. It was 58% in 2020. Like economics, our progress in social justice has been static, increasing and decreasing from one year to the next. However, rather than making forward progress, we are regressing in this area, with a 7% regression rate over the 15 years since we initiated the Equality Index. I have no idea how long it will take for us to achieve equity in social justice, but it is abundantly clear that extraordinary measures are required to stop the school-to-prison pipeline and rid our inner-city neighborhoods of guns, drugs, violent crime, blight, and police brutality.

Is Equity Enough to mitigate these intractable inequities? If all things were equal from the start, the answer to the question would be a resounding YES. But all things are not equal. So, where do we go from here?

As we contemplate the answer, we must do so with deep reflection on the past. I am moved by the words of American novelist James Baldwin, who said, "...but I think that the past is all that makes the present coherent, and further, that the past will remain horrible for exactly as long as we refuse to assess it honestly."³ Certainly, we cannot chart a path forward absent the knowledge of how we got here. As reported by *The Nation*: It took 400 years of slavery, segregation, and institutionalized discrimination in the labor and housing markets to build the wealth gap that we see today. For example, by the time the Fair Housing Act made discrimination in housing illegal in 1968, people of color had missed out on decades of robust growth in the housing markets—and much of the next generation missed out on that wealth building in the 20 years it took to fully implement the law.⁴ "The racial wealth divide is how the past shows up in the present," Chuck Collins told *The Nation*. "We have a deep legacy of wealth inequality that undermines the whole idea that we have a meritocracy—that there's an equal playing field."⁵

Without this understanding, we would continue investing time and valuable resources in feckless attempts to "fix" Black people rather than deconstruct the structurally racist system that breeds and sustains the perpetual cycle of poverty and powerlessness that suppresses our economic progress.

Further, we can't chart a path forward to address the inequities in our justice system without a look back at the origination and purpose of the Slave Patrols and the enforcement of the

Slave Codes, Jim Crow segregation, and the War on Drugs that resulted in mass murders and the mass incarceration of Blacks. We must remember the lynchings, beatings, torture, rape, and numerous other instances of violence that were inflicted on Blacks by Slave Patrols during slavery and subsequently by police officers for decades following the abolition of slavery.

As we chart a path forward we cannot expect a different outcome if we continue to do the things we've been doing. We cannot chart a path forward without unity of purpose and the unwavering determination to stay the course against all odds. Make no mistake: There are those who don't want equity and justice for all. "National politics—along with a rise in hate crimes and a resurgence of white supremacist movements—has emboldened white people frustrated by their perceived loss of power to take out their fear and anxiety on communities of color."⁶ This fear has spawned a movement by right-wing conservative legislatures to roll back voting rights and pass laws banning the teaching of Critical Race Theory in public education institutions. The fact that we are in a battle to protect our right to vote 56 years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is unconscionable.

Systemic racism is a powerful force of resistance that stunts our growth and impedes our progress.

Derrick Bell was spot on when he said, "Resistance is a powerful motivator precisely because it enables us to fulfill our longing to achieve our goals while letting us boldly recognize and name the obstacles to those achievements."⁷

We've named the obstacles. Now we must counter the resistance with more vigor and tenacity to shift the momentum forward to the systemic change we seek. This is our charge.

1 <https://ips-dc.org/report-ever-growing-gap/>

2 <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/the-average-black-family-would-need-228-years-to-build-the-wealth-of-a-white-family-today/>

3 <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/3247507-in-the-context-of-the-negro-problem-neither-whites-nor>

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Lockhart, P.R. (2018, December 31). *911 Calls on Black People were One of 2018's Biggest Stories about Race*. Vox.

7 <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/389032-resistance-is-a-powerful-motivator-precisely-because-it-enables-us>

CHARTING
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**IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?**



P R E F A C E

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Director
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The media describes the last year as a “racial reckoning.” There is no doubt that awareness of racial inequality, and particularly its structural and system features, is now mainstream and far more widely appreciated. Colorblindness is on its heels. But a reckoning implies more than awareness or even a ledger book accounting; it denotes redress, remedy, and reparation. Although the wave of protests last year has stimulated many reforms, generally at the local level, it is safe to say that even the most modest aspirations for that moment have barely cleared the policy change bar, let alone the more ambitious programs and bolder policy prescriptions imagined in that moment.

This capacious report, covering the realms of economics, education, health, social justice, and civic engagement, is a sobering reminder of how far we have yet to go. With a focus on Kansas City, one of the nation’s heartland metropolitan areas, this report reminds us of the persistence of racial disparities in the most vital arenas of life. But more than that, it is also a reminder of the interconnectedness of these outcomes, of how systemic racial inequality exists, not just in the narrow sense of the word, occurring within each of the systems (be they our healthcare systems, educational systems, or voting systems) that occupy these realms, but also in the larger sense, of the interconnection of these systems across these realms: that structural racism is also a system of systems. And we must understand their operation in both senses.

This report helps us do exactly that, by allowing the reader to dive into each of these realms, but then surface and soar above to see how they fit together, constraining and delimiting the life chances of too many of this great region’s Black citizens. This report provides both a granular view of how racial inequality persists, but also a bird’s eye view of how the systems all fit together, reinforcing each other along the way. And not just one to identify problems, this report also charts a path towards solutions, identifying policy levers that can be pulled to reset the trajectory of these systems.

Change always seems impossible until it happens.

A reckoning is impossible if denial prevails.

The window of opportunity for systemic change has not closed, but new headwinds have appeared, and not just the intransigence of a Senate filibuster, but backlash to racial reckoning itself. Although the new backlash takes many forms, from a misleading attack on Critical Race Theory to a critique of “equity” itself, it should be clear to any conscientious observer that progress requires more than awareness; it requires vigilance and continual effort. At this time, state legislatures are debating and adopting laws that would make teaching history more difficult, not easier. A reckoning is impossible if denial prevails.

This is what makes the theme of this report, “Is Equity Enough?,” so critical. The framing of the question implies the answer. Although it depends on exactly what is meant by equity, it is clear that, too often, equity is conceived narrowly: that it is only and always about closing racial disparities or a panoply of narrow race-targeted measures. If this is all we mean by equity, then the answer is a resounding negative. Let me highlight a few of the reasons.

First, racial disparities can shrink or diminish not because we have raised the floor, but because the ceiling has fallen. Decreasing White life expectancy, on account of both COVID and the opioid epidemic, or a surge in White unemployment, may imply an improving state of affairs when focused on disparity data, when in fact, most Black lives have little improved. Racial disparities can disappear even as the world becomes objectively worse. Disparities data can mislead as much as illuminate.

Second, many of the problems we face cannot be solved in a race-specific manner. Bail reform, changing use of force standards for police, or restoring voting rights protections are policy initiatives more suited to universalistic policy design. Although it is often said that race-specific problems require race-specific solutions, this simplistic formula overlooks the fact that many reforms are more easily and efficiently solved in a larger policy sheath. It would make little sense to adopt bail reform standards that apply only to Black people, or to end only the prosecution of Black people under the auspices of the War on Drugs, for the same reasons that the framers of the Poll Tax Amendment in 1962 rejected race-specific versions of that proposed amendment. A society where poll taxes or the War on Drugs persist, but only when applied to non-Black people, is hardly a racially just one.

This suggests yet another, perhaps more pragmatic, concern with equity, narrowly conceived. Enacting any of these reforms requires broad political support. A narrow equity lens reifies a zero-sum mentality, feeding the backlash to racial progress. This backlash has been stimulated, in part, by such misguided though well-meaning efforts to try to redress racial disparities. This is where equity too often traps itself and is another reason why I advocate for Targeted Universalism, or what I call “Equity 2.0.”



Targeted Universalism is an approach to policy that requires setting universal goals, but pursuing those goals with targeted processes, programs, and initiatives. In this way, targeted universalism rejects a blanket universal that might exacerbate disparities, but it also rejects a tendency to solve every racial disparity with a narrowly tailored race-specific remedy. Instead, it supports targeted efforts designed to help every group reach the universal goal. This approach is more than a policy design formula; it is also a communications approach. It ensures that no group is “left behind” by design or accident. Everyone’s needs are considered and accounted for, and a positive-sum mentality is fostered and encouraged. In this way, policies generated through the Targeted Universalism process are less vulnerable to attack on the grounds of serving one group and not another, harder to stoke backlash against, and more politically durable. Targeted Universalism demands more of us and our policymakers. It is a more difficult approach, but one that has a better chance of success, politically, legally, *and* in terms of outcomes.

The problems described in this report seem daunting and appear intransigent, resistant to reform or remediation. The backlash to racial progress seems to grow stronger by the day. But there are reasons for optimism, no matter how cautious or guarded. In a society entirely under the influence of denial, reports such as this would not only be impossible, they would be unimaginable. That we can have an unvarnished look at the problems we face and discuss the path forward is always a predicate for change.

But there is another reason to resist falling into the trap of racial pessimism. Significant racial progress, like most progressive reform, has always occurred in spurts. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments were each ratified within a five-year span. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 were each adopted within an even shorter span.

Change always seems impossible until it happens. Until then, we must deepen our understanding of the problem and chart the path forward. This report does exactly that.

URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER KANSAS CITY 2020



EQUALITY INDEX



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS



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BLACK/WHITE



EQUALITY INDEX

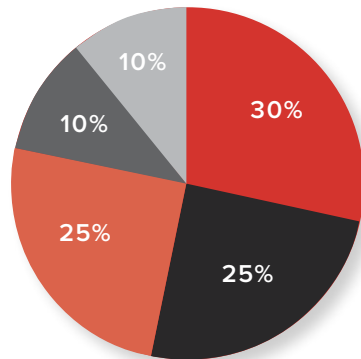
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *2021 State of Black Kansas City – Charting the Path Forward: Is Equity Enough?* provides an in-depth look into the socioeconomic gaps between Blacks and Whites in Greater Kansas City while also questioning the presumption that focusing on equity alone will ameliorate the systemic racial inequality that has persisted for centuries. In addition to presenting a collection of provocative essays and op-eds, this report highlights some of the findings from the 2020 Black/White and Hispanic/White Equality Indexes. The equality indices were first introduced in 2005 by the National Urban League. The reports serve as a way to capture empirical evidence of African-American and Latinx progress in economics, health, education, social justice, and civic engagement since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The Equality Index measures how African Americans are doing in these areas on a 100-point scale. Whites are used as the benchmark (100 points), because the history of race in America has created advantages for Whites that continue to persist in many of the outcomes measured.

UMKC's Center for Economic Information conducted the Equality Index research following the same methodology as the National Urban League. Each category is weighted based on the importance the NUL applies to each as follows:

- **ECONOMICS: 30%**
- **HEALTH: 25%**
- **EDUCATION: 25%**
- **SOCIAL JUSTICE: 10%**
- **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: 10%**



DATA COLLECTION AREA¹

The Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (KCMSA) consists of 14 counties. According to the Census Bureau's five-year estimates for the period from 2015–2019, the total population was 2,110,189. Overall, 85% of the KCMSA population is concentrated in the five largest counties (Clay, Jackson and Platte in Missouri, and Johnson and Wyandotte in Kansas). An even larger percentage of the Black, non-Hispanic population (94%) and the Hispanic population (92%) is concentrated in these five counties. Virtually all the population growth in the KCMSA is due to growth in the Hispanic population. The Hispanic population has grown 4.5% since our 2019 report, while the White and Black population has grown only 0.56% and 1.04%, respectively.

Table 1 presents a tabulation of the Kansas City population by county and by racial/ethnic combinations. The shaded cells signify the populations that are included in the calculation of most of the Equality Indices, Sub-Indices, and components.

TABLE 1: 15-County Kansas City Population by Race/Ethnicity

COUNTY	WHITE NON-HISPANIC	BLACK NON-HISPANIC	HISPANIC	5-COUNTY AREA	OTHER*	ALL RACES/ETHNICITIES
JACKSON (MO)	433,000	161,124	62,514	656,638	35,061	691,699
CLAY (MO)	196,732	14,447	16,479	227,658	13,505	241,163
PLATTE (MO)	81,559	6,732	6,082	94,373	5,501	99,874
WYANDOTTE (KS)	67,390	35,794	47,625	150,809	12,558	163,367
JOHNSON (KS)	472,754	27,116	45,285	545,155	43,646	588,801
5-COUNTY AREA	1,251,435	245,213	177,985	1,674,633	110,271	1,784,904
OTHER 9 KCMSA COUNTIES*	293,177	14,728	14,504	332,783	10,374	325,285
14-COUNTY AREA*	1,544,612	259,941	192,489	2,007,416	120,645	2,110,189

SOURCE: ACS 2015–2019 5-YEAR ESTIMATES

* NOTE: In February 2013, the MSA changed from a 15-county area to 14 after Franklin County, KS was dropped.

2020 CENSUS UPDATE²

Table 1 illustrates the Kansas City population by race/ethnicity from the ACS 2015–2019 Estimates. This was the most recent data available until the United States Census Bureau published the 2020 Decennial Census Public Law 74-191 Redistricting Data (2020 Census), which contains summaries for major race and ethnicity groups.

The population estimates for the 14-county region using the ACS 2015–2019 estimates showed total population of 2,110,189. From the 2020 Census data, the population for the 14-county region in 2020 was 2,159,051 (Table 1A). This represents a 2.3% increase in total population for the 14-county area. The population increase for the 5-county region used in the report increased 4.0%.

TABLE 1A: 15-County Kansas City Population by Race/Ethnicity

COUNTY	WHITE NON-HISPANIC	BLACK NON-HISPANIC	HISPANIC	5-COUNTY AREA	OTHER*	ALL RACES/ETHNICITIES
JACKSON (MO)	419,542	156,542	77,785	653,869	63,335	717,204
CLAY (MO)	193,282	17,853	18,850	229,985	23,350	253,335
PLATTE (MO)	81,426	8,135	7,161	96,722	9,996	106,718
WYANDOTTE (KS)	63,079	33,945	55,814	152,838	16,407	169,245
JOHNSON (KS)	460,399	28,092	54,339	542,880	66,983	609,863
5-COUNTY AREA	1,217,728	244,567	213,949	1,676,294	180,071	1,856,365
OTHER 9 KCMSA COUNTIES*	254,291	12,701	14,187	281,179	21,507	302,686
14-COUNTY AREA*	1,472,019	257,268	228,136	1,957,473	201,578	2,159,051

SOURCE: CENSUS 2020

*NOTE: In February 2013, the MSA changed from a 15-county area to 14 after Franklin County, KS was dropped.

The White non-Hispanic population for the 5-county region decreased 2.7% in the 2020 Census data when compared to the ACS 2015–2019 estimates. The Black non-Hispanic population decreased 0.2% in the 2020 Census when compared to the ACS 2015–2019 estimates. There was tremendous growth in population in the 5-county region for the Hispanic population. The Hispanic population for the 5-county region increased 20.2% in the 2020 Census data when compared to the ACS 2015–2019 estimates.

Table 1B shows the differences (increase and decrease) between the ACS 2015–2019 estimates and the 2020 Census data.

TABLE 1B: 15-County Kansas City Population by Race/Ethnicity

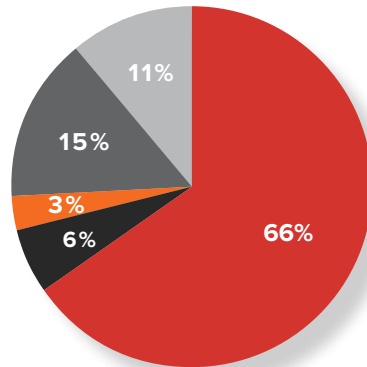
COUNTY	WHITE NON-HISPANIC	BLACK NON-HISPANIC	HISPANIC	5-COUNTY AREA	OTHER*	ALL RACES/ETHNICITIES
JACKSON (MO)	-13,458	-4,582	15,271	-2,769	28,274	25,505
CLAY (MO)	-3,450	3,406	2,371	2,327	9,845	12,172
PLATTE (MO)	-133	1,403	1,079	2,349	4,495	6,844
WYANDOTTE (KS)	-4,311	-1,849	8,189	2,029	3,849	5,878
JOHNSON (KS)	-12,355	976	9,054	-2,275	23,337	21,062
5-COUNTY AREA	-33,707	-646	35,964	1,661	69,800	71,461
OTHER 9 KCMSA COUNTIES*	-38,886	-2,027	-317	-41,230	11,133	-22,599
14-COUNTY AREA*	-72,593	-2,673	35,647	-39,569	80,933	48,862

SOURCE: ACS 2015–2019 5-YEAR ESTIMATES / CENSUS 2020

*NOTE: In February 2013, the MSA changed from a 15-county area to 14 after Franklin County, KS was dropped.

FIGURE 1: Distribution of Black Population in 5-County Kansas City Region

- JACKSON (MO)
- CLAY (MO)
- PLATTE (MO)
- WYANDOTTE (KS)
- JOHNSON (KS)



TO ACCESS THE COMPLETE 2020 BLACK/WHITE AND HISPANIC/WHITE EQUALITY INDEXES, PLEASE VISIT THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER KANSAS CITY'S WEBSITE:

<https://www.ulkc.org/social-justice>

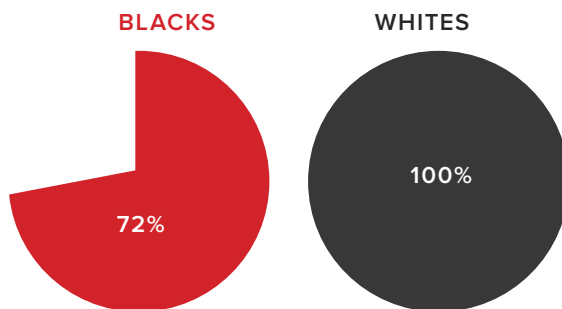


1 Urban League of Greater Kansas City 2020 Equality Index, Linwood Tauheed, Ph.D., Panayiotis Manalagos, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigators, and Michael Kelsay, Ph.D., UMKC Center for Economic Information, p. 5.

2 Ibid.

KEY FINDINGS

The 2020 Equality Index of Black Kansas City is 72%. This means that rather than having a whole pie (100%) – full equality with Whites in 2020 – African Americans are missing 28% of the pie.



A comparison of the Equality Index of Black Kansas City for previous years with the 2020 Index illustrates that progress has been static in all categories, and progression has been slowest in Economics and Social Justice.

EQUALITY INDEX OF BLACK KANSAS CITY*

YEAR	2006	2007	2008	2010	2015	2019	2020
BLACK/WHITE INDEX	73%	75%	75%	74%	72%	73%	72%
ECONOMICS	54%	57%	58%	53%	57%	61%	62%
HEALTH	80%	82%	83%	78%	77%	75%	76%
EDUCATION	78%	79%	78%	85%**	78%	77%	75%
SOCIAL JUSTICE	65%	62%	67%	58%	52%	55%	58%
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	1.09%	1.14%	1.08%	1.09%	1.07%	1.09%	100%

*Index percentages are rounded to the nearest value.

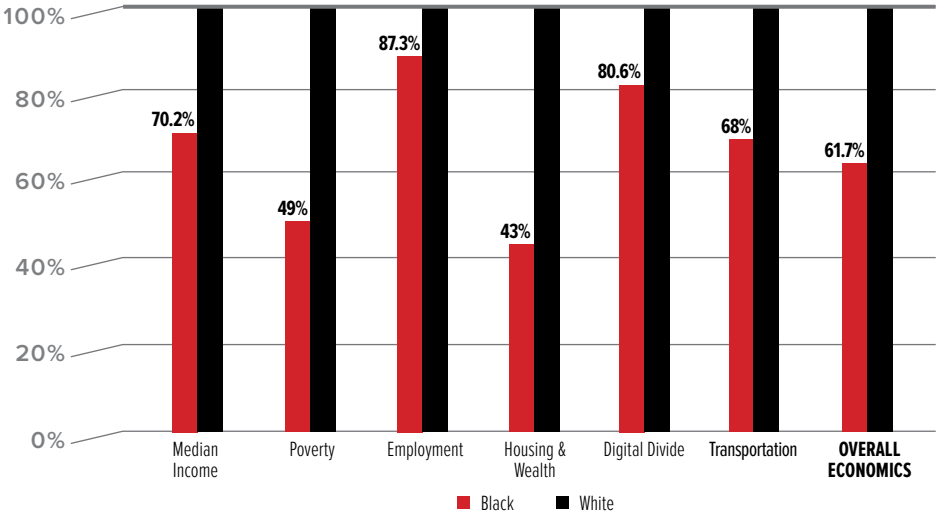
**The measurable increase in education in 2010 was due in large part to significant changes in weights of the sub-indices in education as determined by the National Urban League and Global Insights. If we had used the exact weights for the sub-indices in 2010 that were used in 2008, the education index would have increased from .782 to .799, an increase of only 2.1%.

Several key sub-indicators factor into the overall index for each category. The most salient of those sub-indicators are highlighted as follows.

ECONOMICS – 30%³

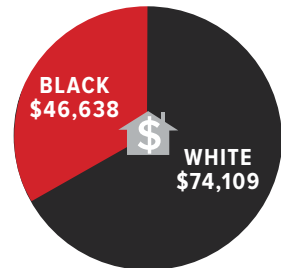
Key weights in the Economic Sub-Index illuminate the racial wealth gap between Blacks and Whites in the five-county Kansas City area. They are Median Household Income, Median Net Worth of Households, Rate of Home Ownership, Housing and Wealth, and Poverty Rate. The bold horizontal gray bar in the figures gives a point of reference as to how the White population is faring on the same components.

FIGURE 2: *Contributing Factors to the Black Economics Sub-Index*

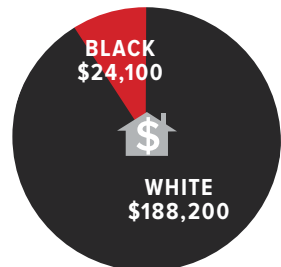


Comparisons between the Black and White populations for these variable are striking. **Black Median Household Income is only 62.9%** compared to Whites in 2020. **Median Net Worth of Black Households in 2020 is only 12.8%** compared to their White counterparts. **The Home Ownership rate of Blacks is only 56%** compared to their White counterparts. The Kansas City real estate market has expanded substantially from 2018 to 2020. Yet, Blacks have not been the beneficiary of a booming real estate market in the region. **Black Home Ownership increased only 4.8%** during that period, while the White Home Ownership rate has increased 21.3%. **Poverty (15% of the Economics Sub-Index). The Poverty Index is 49% in 2020. Especially alarming is the value of 53% for the number of households in**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

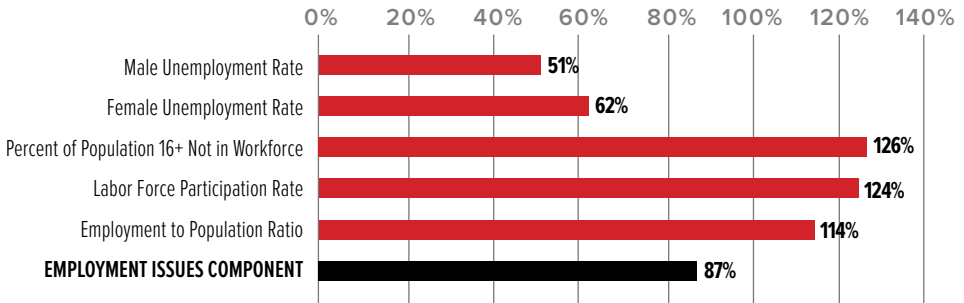


MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD NET WORTH



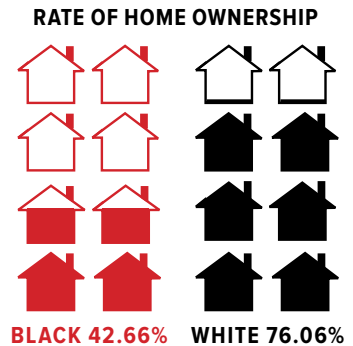
the **Households Below the Poverty** component. This means that the percentage of Black households in poverty is almost two times as high as the percentage of White households in poverty.

FIGURE 3: Index Values for Black Employment Issues Variables



Employment is another indicator of economic well-being. **On average, Blacks in the Greater Kansas City area are unemployed at rates 1.5 to 2 times higher than Whites.** However, the Labor Force Participation rate for Black people increased from 96% in 2016 to 124% in 2020.

The **Housing and Wealth⁴** indicator – a critical component of Median Net Worth – is the largest contributor to the dismal performance in the Economics Sub-Index for Black residents in Kansas City. **Of note is the fact that the Home Ownership rate in 2020 remains unchanged from 2015 at 58%. In addition, the Mortgage Denial Rate index was 51%, and the Home Improvement Denial Rate index was 54%. The median Black household does not own a home (less than 50%) and, therefore, there is zero wealth from the home for the median Black household.** Slightly more than 76% of White households own their home in the Kansas City region, and therefore, Whites have wealth from the home in the form of home equity.



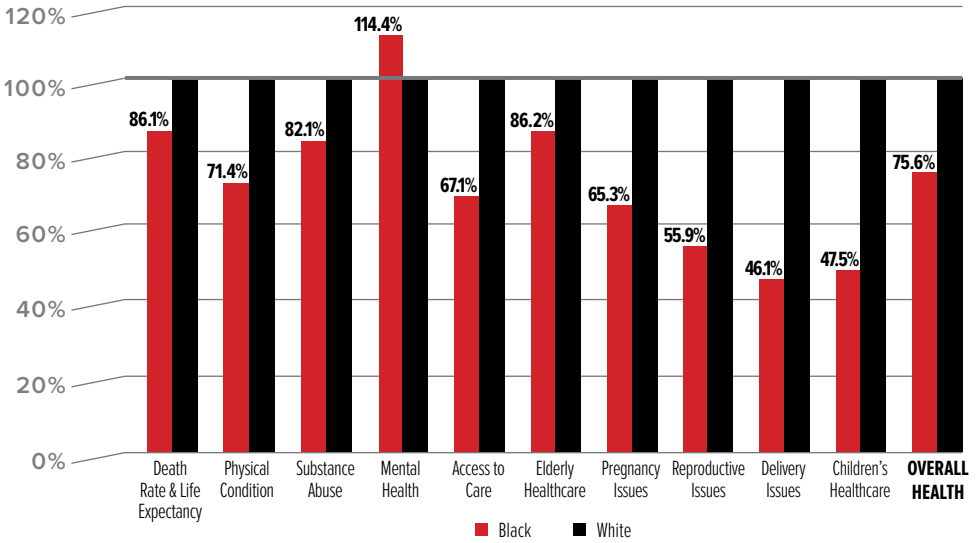
The Digital Divide (5% of the Economics Sub-Index). The digital divide variable is the ratio of the percentage of individuals living in Black households with access to the Internet to the percentage of individuals in White households with access to the Internet. Because data for the Kansas City region were not available, we used the national value as a proxy. The national value of the Digital Divide Index was 87% in 2019 compared to 81% in 2015. Keep in mind that these numbers are from ACS 5-year estimates for 2013–2017. Given COVID-19 protocols over the past two years, the lack of broadband access for the Black community’s children would severely impact this index as well as other indices such as the Education component.

HEALTH – 25%⁵

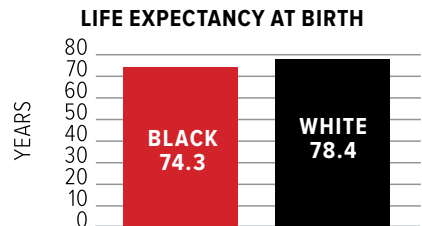
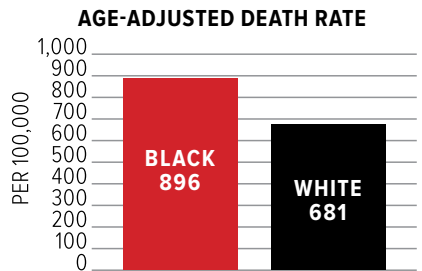
The Health Sub-Index for 2020 is 76% compared to 75% in 2019.

Four variables contributed most to the Health Sub-Index value: (1) Age-Adjusted Death Rate, (2) Life Expectancy at Birth, (3) Percentage of Adults Who Are Overweight or Obese, and (4) Fetal Death Rate.

FIGURE 4: *Contributing Factors to the Black Health Sub-Index*



The Age-Adjusted Death Rate Index value in 2020 is 77% while the rate in 2015 was 86%. The Life Expectancy at Birth Index is 96% in 2020 compared to 99% in 2015. The Fetal Death Rate Index is 70% in 2020 compared to an index rate of 39% in 2015. The Incidence of Obesity (BMI>=30) has improved from 2015 levels as well. The Incidence of Obesity (BMI>=30) for Blacks has a 2020 index value of 81% compared to a 2019 index value of 68%. The index value was 71% in 2015.



COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the Black community in Jackson County. According to the Kansas City, Missouri Health Department, the COVID-19 Crude Rate per 100,000 in Jackson County had an index value of 32% in

2020. The COVID-19 Death Rate per 1,000 in Eastern Jackson County had an index value of 80% in 2020, and the COVID-19 Case Rate per 1,000 had an index value of 82% in 2020.

Figure 5 shows that the Access to Care variables contribute negatively to both the Health Sub-Index and the overall Equality Index for Black residents of Kansas City. **The People Without Health Insurance variable had an index value of 67% in 2020** compared to only 46% in 2019 and 52% in 2015. **The Access to Care Component was 67% in 2020** compared to an index value of 56% in 2019 and 59% in 2015. **These improvements in the Access to Care Component numbers reflect increasing healthcare coverage under Obamacare.**

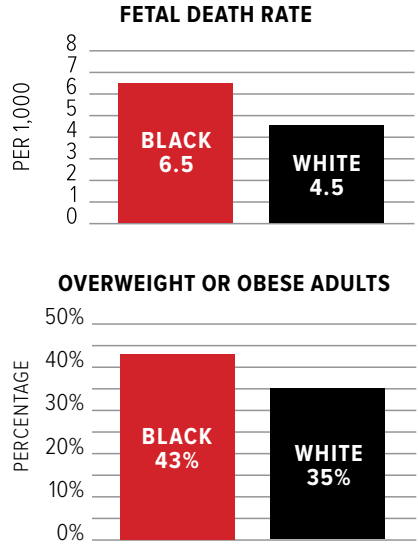
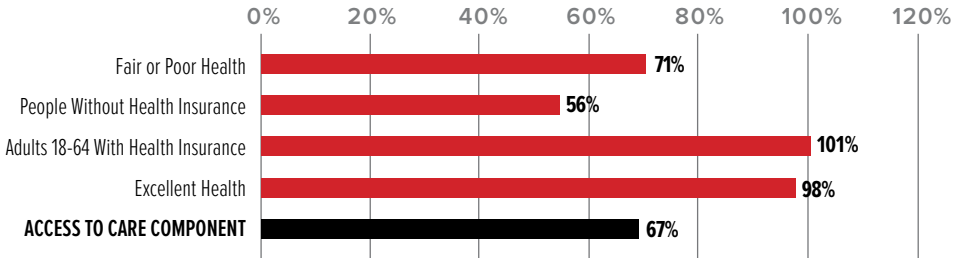


FIGURE 5: *Index Values for Black Access to Care Variables*



EDUCATION – 25%⁶

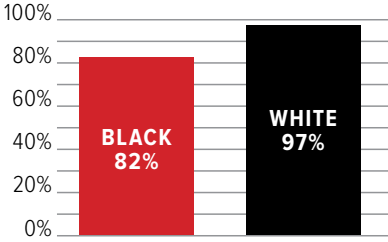
Black students in Kansas City are performing worse educationally than Whites in the Kansas City region. The Education Sub-Index for 2020 is 75% compared to an index of 77% in 2019.

Key contributing variables include: (1) the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers; (2) the percentage of adults (25 and older) who are high-school graduates; (3) the percentage of adults (25 and older) with a bachelor’s degree; and (4) ACT Composite scores.

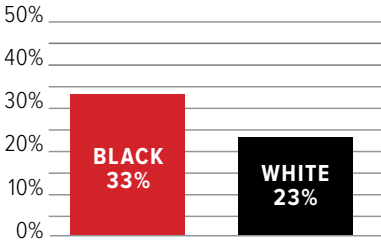
A lower percentage (82%) of classes for Black students are taught by highly qualified teachers than classes for White students (97%).

The average Composite ACT scores for Black students is 14.8 compared to an average composite score of 21.5 for White students.

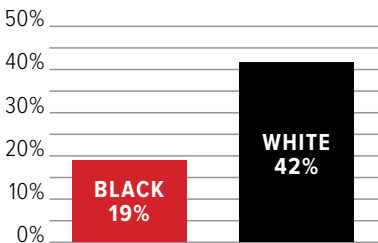
CLASSES TAUGHT BY FULLY LICENSED TEACHERS



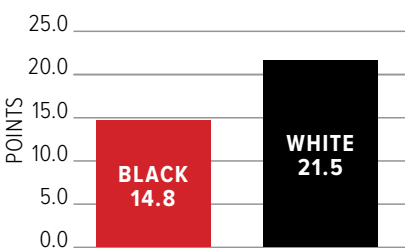
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES (ADULTS 25 AND OLDER)



BACHELOR'S DEGREE (ADULTS 25 AND OLDER)



ACT COMPOSITE SCORES

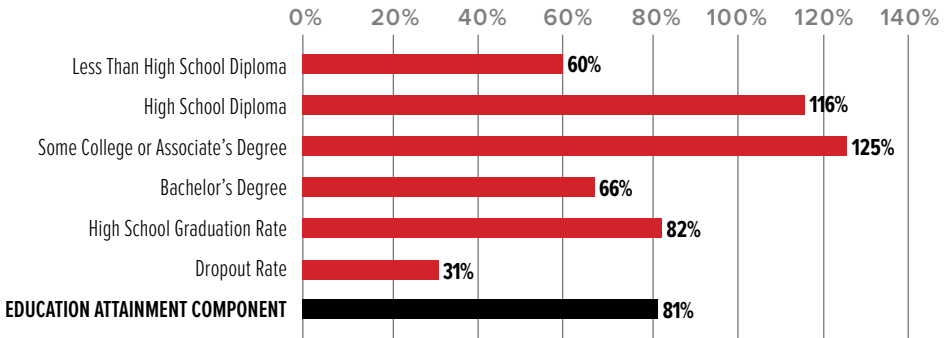


The percentage of high school graduates (% of 25+ population) is higher for Black students (33%) than the rate for White graduates (23%). **However, more than twice as many White students as Black students obtained a bachelor's degree.**

Education Quality (25% of Education). There are two important components of the Education Quality Index. They are the Quality of Teaching and the Quality of Course Offerings. These data were gathered from the Missouri Comprehensive Data System and the Kansas Department of Education and utilized according to the sampling design described on page 25 and 26 of the 2020 Equality Index (<https://www.ulkc.org/social-justice>). The index value of the Education Quality component (79%) is higher than both the Education Sub-Index (75%) and the Black Equality Index (72%).

Education Attainment (30% of Education). In order to measure Attainment, we examined the Highest Educational Level of Individuals Ages 25 and over. At the lower end of the educational spectrum, we calculated the percentage of the population aged 25 and over with Less than a Ninth Grade Education. At the upper end of the educational spectrum, we calculated the percentages of the population aged 25 and over with a Bachelor's degree, and with a Graduate or Professional degree. The data for these rates are from the respective State Departments of Education. The Education Attainment component is summarized in Figure 6.

Additionally, Student Status and Risk Factors are included in calculating the Education Index. Because the performance of children at school is linked to conditions in their households, these variables were selected: (1) Poverty, (2) Children with No Parent in the Labor Force, (3) Attendance, and (4) Students Eligible for Free Lunches.

FIGURE 6: Index Values for Black Education Attainment Variables

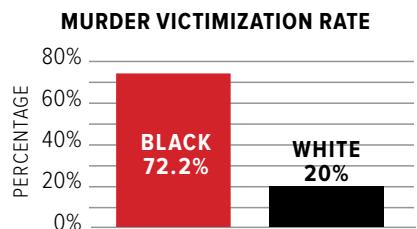
Black children in Greater Kansas City are two to three times more likely than White children to live in poverty and live in a household with no parent in the labor force. Moreover, 100% of Black students in Jackson County are eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch compared to 19% of White students. In Wyandotte County, 73% of Black students are economically disadvantaged compared to 44% of White students. These data were not available for Clay and Platte Counties.

Discipline variables that are indicative of the high probability of Black children being removed from mainstream classrooms were also included. **In Jackson County, Black children are three times more likely than White students to be suspended from school for 10 or more days.** These data were not available for Clay and Platte Counties in Missouri and Wyandotte and Johnson Counties in Kansas.

SOCIAL JUSTICE – 10%⁷

The Social Justice Sub-Index for 2020 is 58% compared to 55.0% in 2019.

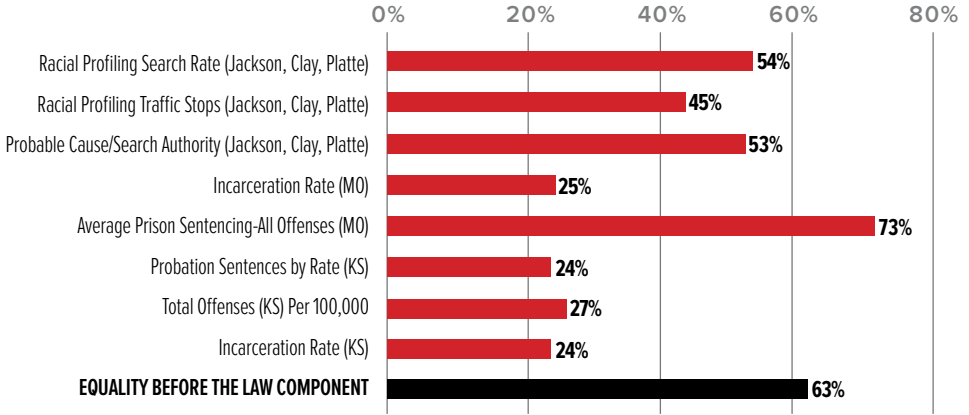
Two variables carried the greatest weight in the calculation of the Black Social Justice Sub-Index. **Local Vehicle Stops in Proportion to the Population for Blacks compared to Whites index value was 67%, documenting Blacks are disproportionately stopped while driving compared to Whites. The Murder Victimization Rate is disturbing, with 72% of murder victims from the Black population, compared to 20% of victims from the White population.**



Equality Before the Law (70% of Social Justice). The largest category in the Social Justice Sub-Index addresses Equal Treatment Before the Law in our region. Figure 7 summarizes the Equality Before the Law component, with an index value of 63%. Although this represents an

improvement from the 2015 index value of 56%, the Kansas City Region is far from a colorblind region. This component is above the total Social Justice Index of 55% and substantially less than the overall Equality Index. This component is a significant contributor to inequality in the Kansas City Region.

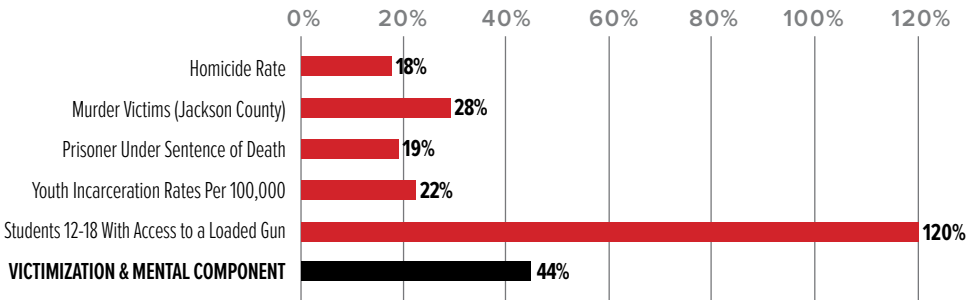
FIGURE 7: Index Values for Black Equality Before the Law Component Variables



The Incarceration Rate for Whites is less than 25% of the Incarceration Rate for Blacks in both Missouri and Kansas. Also, disturbing trends are revealed from the racial profiling statistics from the Missouri Highway Patrol. **The Racial Profiling Search Rate has an index value of 54%. The Racial Profiling Traffic Stops has an index value of 45%, and Probable Cause/Search Authority has an index value of 54%. It is apparent from the statistics that Blacks are being disproportionately targeted in the region.**

Figure 8 summarizes the **Victimization and Mental Anguish component (30% of Social Justice) at an index value of 44% in 2020** compared to 42% in 2019. The component index was 44% in 2015. **The Homicide Rate index value in the region is six times as great among the Black population as it is among the White population. The Homicide Victimization Rate index value is 28%, almost four times as large for the Black population as it is for the White population.**

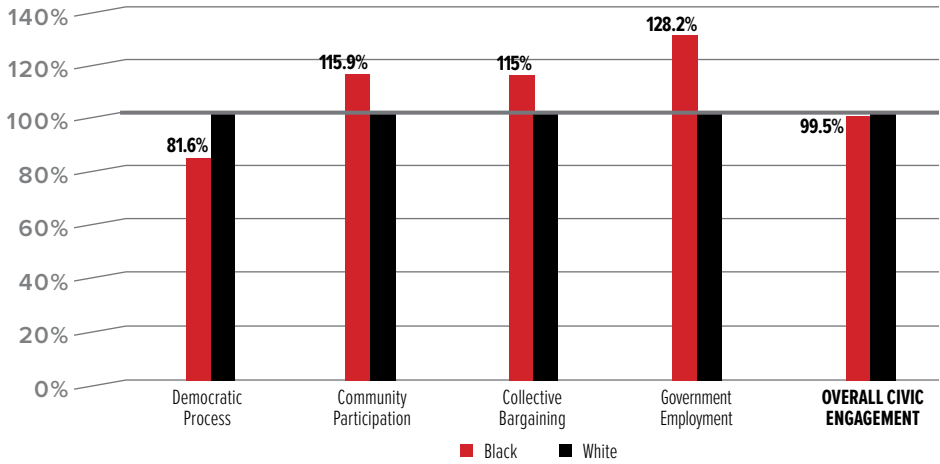
FIGURE 8: Index Values for Black Victimization and Mental Anguish Component Variables



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – 10%⁸

The Civic Engagement Sub-Index for the Black Equality Index is 99.5% in 2020 compared to an index value of 1.09% in 2019 and an index value of 1.07% in 2015. At the national level, the Civic Engagement Sub-Index for the Black Equality Index for 2020 was 100.0% and 99.7% in 2019.

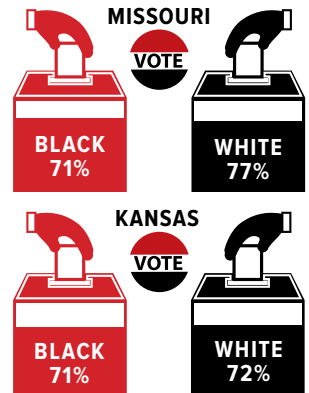
FIGURE 9: *Contributing Factors to the Black Civic Engagement Sub-Index*



Two variables that serve as major indicators of Civic Engagement are the Percentage of U.S. Citizens 18 and Older Who Voted and the Percentage of Workers 16 and Older Who Work in the Private Nonprofit Sector. Figure 9 displays the relative equality of registered voters (70.0% of Blacks and 74% of Whites) and the relative equality of participation in the workforce within the private nonprofit sector (9% of Blacks, compared to 8% of Whites).

Democratic Process (40% of Civic Engagement). The Democratic process component is calculated from the percentage of registered voters from the Population in Kansas and Missouri 18 and over. **The index value for this component was 82% in 2020** compared to 95% in the 2019 report. **This value suggests less equality in the overall experiences related to voter registration.** There are differences between Missouri and Kansas regarding the Democratic Process component. **According to the Kaiser Family Foundation’s Missouri data in 2020, 71% of Black U.S. citizens over 18 were registered to vote** compared to 77% of Whites. **In Kansas, 71% of Blacks U.S. citizens over 18 were registered to vote,** compared to a White voter registration percentage of 72%.

CITIZENS REGISTERED TO VOTE



CONCLUSION

The Kansas City Black Equality Index of 72.0% in 2020 reveals that charting the path forward will require a vastly different approach. We cannot continue to do the same things we've always done and expect a different outcome. Concerted, collaborative efforts are needed to address the multiplicity and complexity of the systems that perpetuate these intractable disparities. Clearly, to achieve equity we must endeavor to thoroughly understand the interconnectivity of structural racism to replace it with systems, policies, and practices that leave no individual or group behind. The path forward must be paved with deeper knowledge, thorough planning, collective determination to prevail against all odds, and rigorous action.

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<https://www.ulkc.org/social-justice>



3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 Ibid., p. 15.

5 Ibid., pp. 17-23.

6 Ibid., pp. 24-28.

7 Ibid., pp. 29-31.

8 Ibid., pp. 32-34.



HISPANIC/WHITE

EQUALITY INDEX

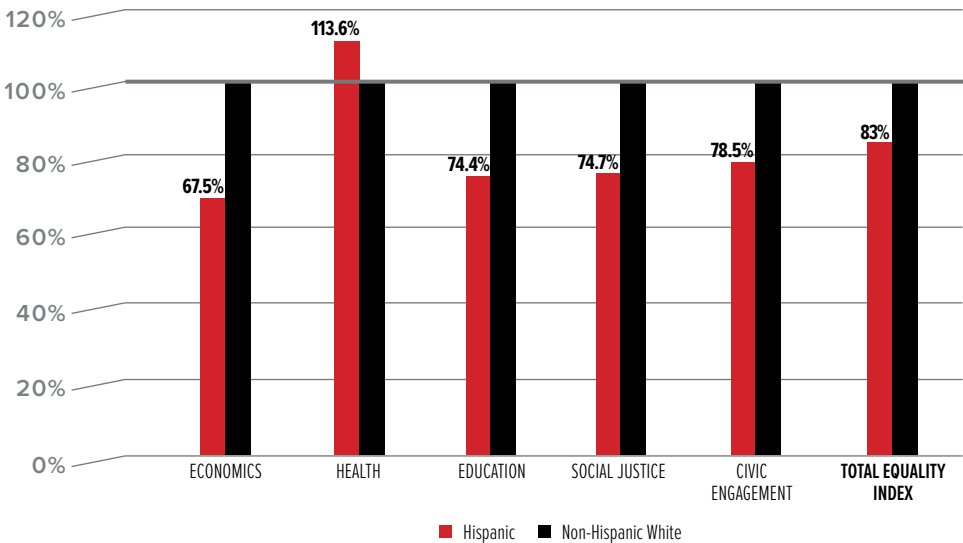
KEY FINDINGS

The 2020 Equality Index for Hispanic Kansas City represents the third expansion comparing Hispanic and non-Hispanic White Kansas City residents. The first comparison of Hispanic and non-Hispanic White Kansas City residents was conducted in 2015.

The index follows a methodology used by the National Urban League in its most recent Equality Index publication.¹ This method compares the value of indicators in several categories for Hispanic residents of Kansas City with the value of the same indicators for non-Hispanic White residents of Kansas City. The index uses data from the five most populous counties of the Kansas City Metro Area (Clay, Jackson and Platte in Missouri, and Johnson and Wyandotte in Kansas).

The 2020 Kansas City Hispanic Index value is 83%, an improvement of 5.8% since 2019 but an improvement of just 1.6% annually since 2015, indicating that Hispanics have achieved little progress over time between 2015 and 2019. The bold horizontal gray bar in the figures gives a point of reference as to how the non-Hispanic White population is faring on the same components.

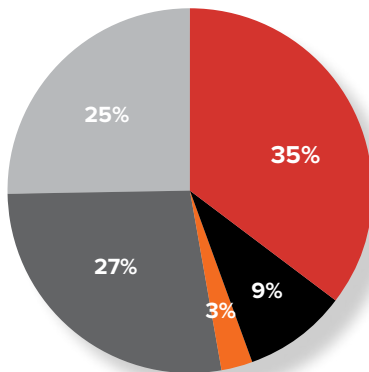
FIGURE 1: *The State of Hispanic Kansas City: 2020 Equality Index and Sub-Indices*



It is important to adjust for the distribution of the Hispanic population by county. Most of the Hispanic population (88%) is in Jackson, Wyandotte, and Johnson Counties (see the distribution of the Hispanic population in Figure 2). When calculating regional values, the county value is given the weight of the proportion of the Hispanic population in the county.

FIGURE 2: *Distribution of Hispanic Population in 5-County Kansas City Region*

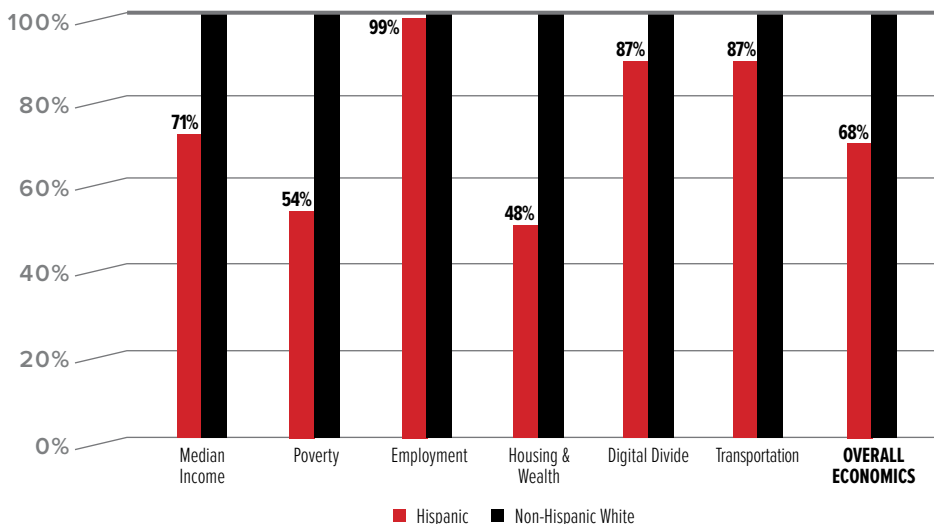
- JACKSON (MO)
- CLAY (MO)
- PLATTE (MO)
- WYANDOTTE (KS)
- JOHNSON (KS)



ECONOMICS – 30%

In the Kansas City region, the Economics Sub-Index of the Hispanic Equality Index for 2020 has a value of 67.5%. Figure 3 illustrates the fact that Hispanic economic conditions are worse than the economic conditions of non-Hispanic Whites across all contributing factors, particularly regarding the Poverty and Housing & Wealth measures.

FIGURE 3: *Contributing Factors to the Hispanic Economics Sub-Index*

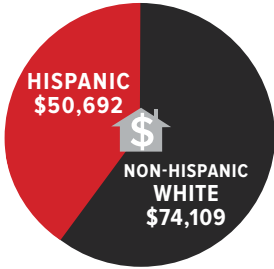


There are several key variables in the Economic Sub-Index that highlight the meager economic progress for Hispanic people. Four key weights in the Economic Sub-Index highlight the poor performance of the Hispanic community. They are (1) Median Household Income, (2) Median Net Worth, (3) Poverty Rate, and (4) Rate of Home Ownership.

Hispanic Median Household Income is 68% of that for non-Hispanic Whites, and **Median Household Net Worth of Hispanics is 19%** that of non-Hispanic Whites. In 2015, Median

Household Income was 75% compared to their non-Hispanic White counterparts, a decrease of 7%. **The Poverty rate of Hispanic people is double the rate of non-Hispanic Whites, while the Home Ownership rate of Hispanic people is 7% that of non-Hispanic Whites.**

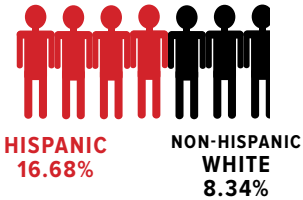
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Poverty (15% of the Economics Sub-Index). The index value of **the Poverty component is 54%** compared to 50% in the 2019 report.

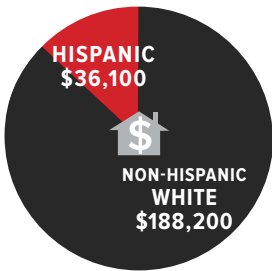
Employment Issues (20% of the Economics Sub-Index). Five variables enter into the calculation of the Employment Issues component of the Economics Sub-Index. They are Male and Female Employment, Percent of Population Not in the Workforce, Labor Force Participation Rate, and Employment to Population Ratio.

POVERTY RATE



The overall value for the Housing and Wealth component (34% of the Economics Sub-Index) was 48% in 2020 compared to 44% in 2019 and 44% in 2015. There has been very little improvement in the Housing & Wealth component since 2015. **The Housing and Wealth component is the leading contributor to the dismal outcomes in the Economic Sub-Index for Hispanic residents in Kansas City.**

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD NET WORTH



The Digital Divide (5% of the Economics Sub-Index) is based on a single variable. The digital divide variable is the ratio of the percentage of individuals living in Hispanic households with access to the Internet to the percentage of individuals in non-Hispanic White households with access to the Internet. Because data for the Kansas City region was not available, we used the national value as a proxy. The national value of the Digital Divide Index was 87% in 2020. This national value masks the true digital divide in the Kansas City Region as well as nationally. COVID-19 has highlighted the lack of broadband access.

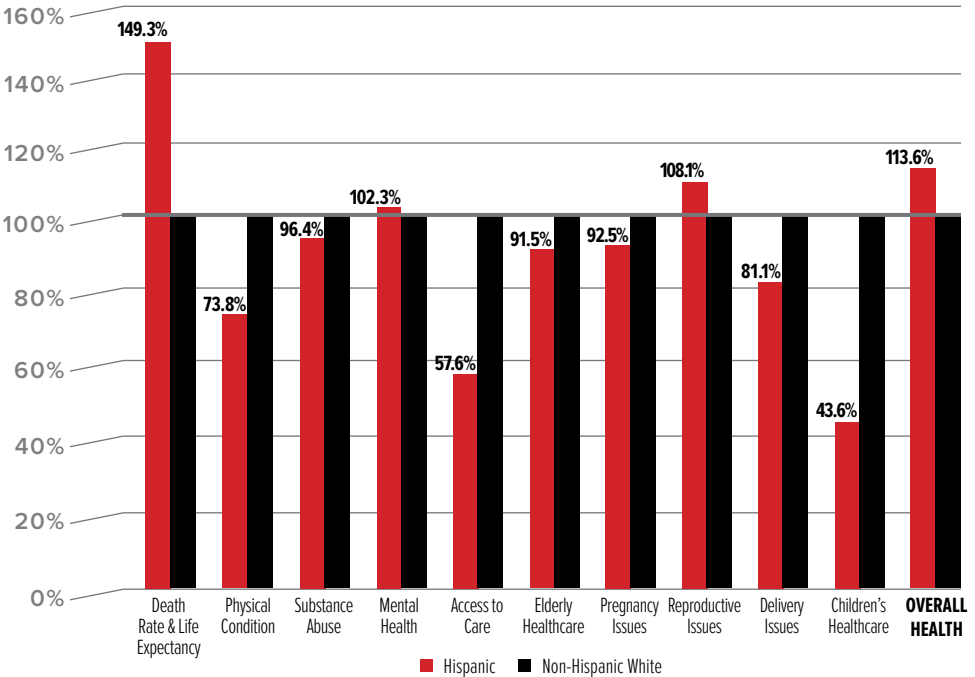
RATE OF HOME OWNERSHIP



HEALTH – 30%

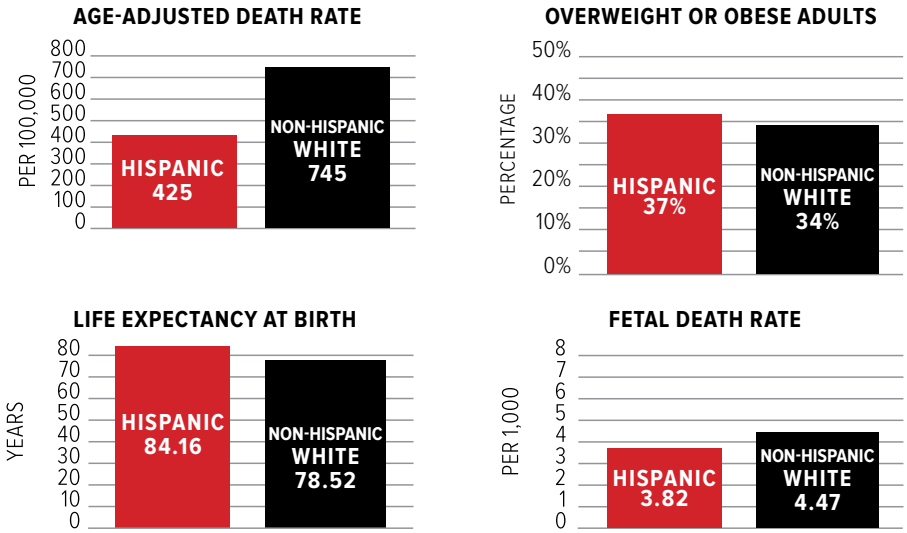
In the Kansas City region, the Health Sub-Index of the Hispanic Equality Index for 2020 is **114%**. The national value for the Hispanic Health Sub-Index is 104%. This represents an increase in the Health Sub-Index for Hispanics. **COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the Hispanic community in Jackson County. According to the Kansas City, Missouri Health Department, the COVID-19 Crude Rate per 100,000 in Jackson County had an index value of only 18% in 2020. The COVID-19 Case Rate per 1,000 had an index value of 72% in 2020.**

FIGURE 4: *Contributing Factors to the Hispanic Health Sub-Index*



There are four individual variables measured in the Health Sub-Index that contribute most to the Health Sub-Index value: (1) Age-Adjusted Death Rate, (2) Life Expectancy at Birth, (3) Percentage of Adults Who Are Overweight or Obese, and (4) Fetal Death Rate.

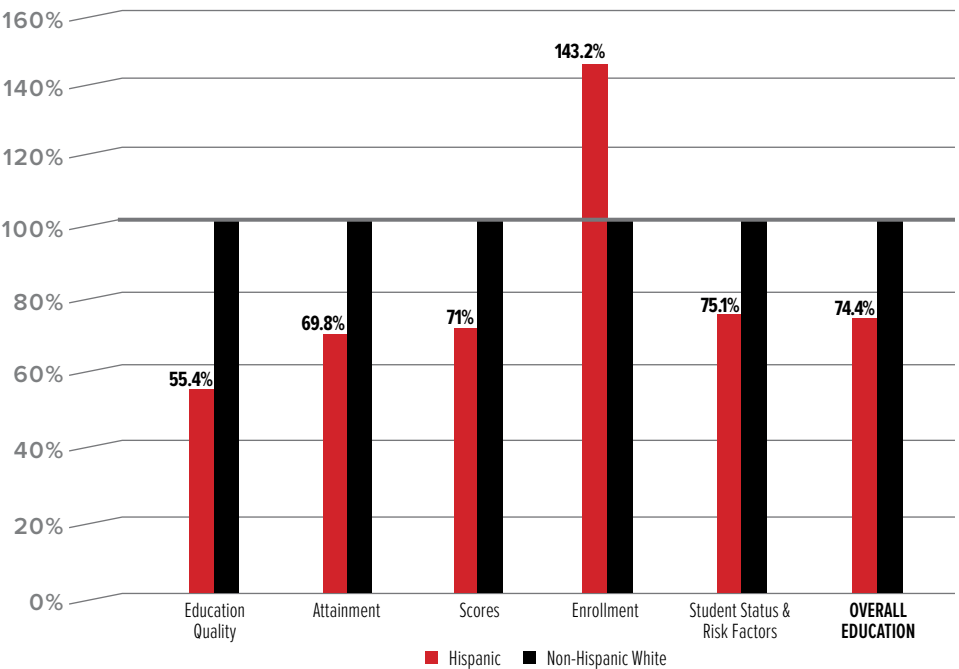
In the five-county Kansas City area, the Hispanic Death Rate is much better than the Death Rate for non-Hispanic Whites, with the index value of 175%, suggesting that Hispanics are faring far better than non-Hispanic Whites. **The Hispanic Life Expectancy at Birth of 84 years** is also better than the Life Expectancy at Birth for non-Hispanic Whites of 79 years. However, **the Incidence of Obesity is higher for Hispanics than for non-Hispanic Whites**, but the Fetal Death Rate for Hispanics is lower than the rate for non-Hispanic Whites (index value of 117%).²



EDUCATION – 25%

In the five-county Kansas City region, the Education Sub-Index for 2020 had a value of 75.3%, clarifying that Hispanic students are performing worse than non-Hispanic Whites in education in the region. Figure 5 presents a summary of the Education Sub-Index and its components, along with their respective index values.

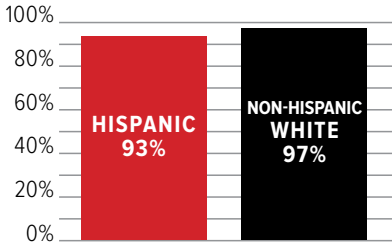
FIGURE 5: *Contributing Factors to the Hispanic Education Sub-Index*



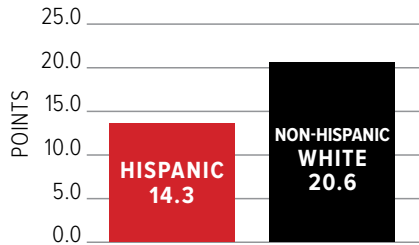
The following variables had substantial weight within the Education area: Percentage of Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers, Composite ACT Score, Percentage of Adults (25 and Older) Who Are High School Graduates, and Percentage of Adults (25 and Older) with a Bachelor's Degree.

The charts below show comparisons between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic White populations of the five-county Kansas City area.

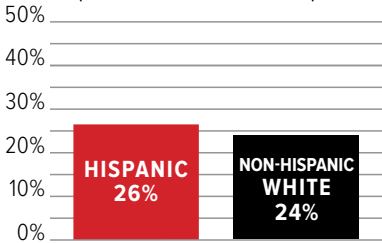
CLASSES TAUGHT BY FULLY LICENSED TEACHERS



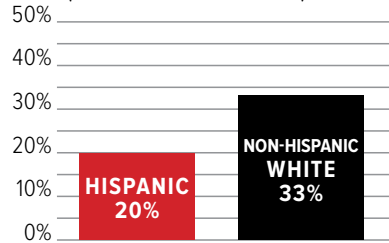
ACT COMPOSITE SCORES



**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
(ADULTS 25 AND OLDER)**



**BACHELOR'S DEGREE
(ADULTS 25 AND OLDER)**



Education Quality (25% of Education). The quality of education that Hispanic Americans and non-Hispanic White Americans receive is not equal. As a result, Hispanic students are at a disadvantage in high schools, in colleges, and in the labor market. There are two important indicators in the Education Quality component: Quality of Teaching and Quality of Course Offerings. The Quality of Teaching is 40% of the Education Quality component, and the Quality of Course Offerings that prepare students for future college work is 60%. The Education Quality component is summarized in Figure 6. The index value of the Education Quality component (53%) is lower than both the Education Sub-Index (75%) and the Hispanic Equality Index (83%). **The Education Quality component negatively influences the overall Education Sub-Index.**

Education Attainment (30% of Education). In order to measure Attainment, we examined the Highest Educational Level of Individuals Ages 25 and Over. At the lower end of the educational spectrum, we calculated the percentage of the population aged 25 and over with Less than a High School Diploma. At the upper end of the educational spectrum, we

calculated the percentages of the population aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree. The Education Attainment component is summarized in Figure 7.

The index value of the Education Attainment component is 70% in 2020 compared to an index value of 72% in 2019. These index values in 2020 are below the Education Sub-Index (75%) and below the Hispanic Equality Index (83%).

FIGURE 6: *Index Values for Hispanic Education Quality Variables*

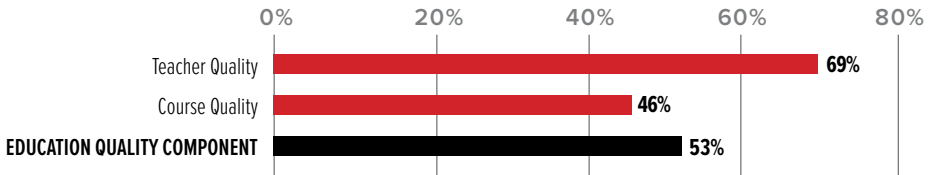
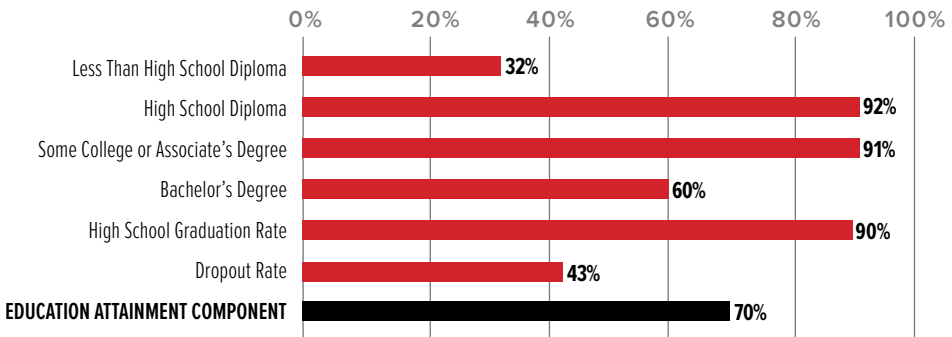


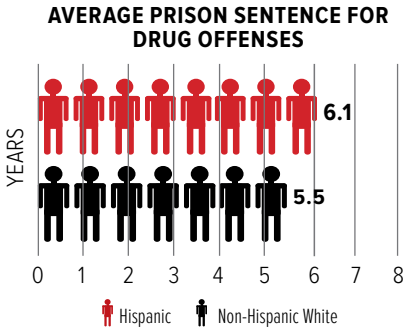
FIGURE 7: *Index Values for Hispanic Education Attainment Variables*



SOCIAL JUSTICE – 10%

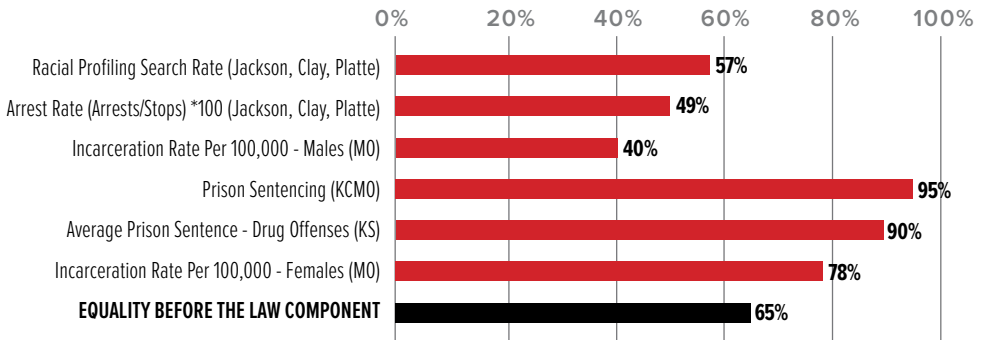
In the Kansas City region, the Social Justice Sub-Index for the Hispanic Equality Index is 77.2% in 2020 compared to 74.7% in 2019 and 70.3% in 2015. At the national level, the Social Justice Sub-Index for 2020 was 66.4%, compared to 64.5% in 2019 and 66.1% in 2015. In part, this lower sub-index value means that Hispanics in the Kansas City region are not only faring markedly worse than non-Hispanic Whites, but they are also experiencing similar inequality to other Hispanic populations across the United States, as measured by the national Social Justice Sub-Index. There are two components of the Social Justice Sub-Index: Equality Before the Law and Victimization & Mental Anquish.

One important variable within these components is the Average Prison Sentence for Drug Offenses. **The average length of prison sentences for Hispanic people is 6.1 years, and the average for non-Hispanic Whites is 5.5 years. The index value for this variable is 90% in 2020.**



Equality Before the Law (70% of Social Justice) is the largest category in the Social Justice Sub-Index. Figure 8 summarizes the **Equality Before the Law component, with an index value of 65% in 2020**. This represents deterioration from the index value of 76% in 2015. **The Kansas City region is far from a region that is non-discriminatory based on race.**

FIGURE 8: Index Values for Hispanic Equality Before the Law Component Variables

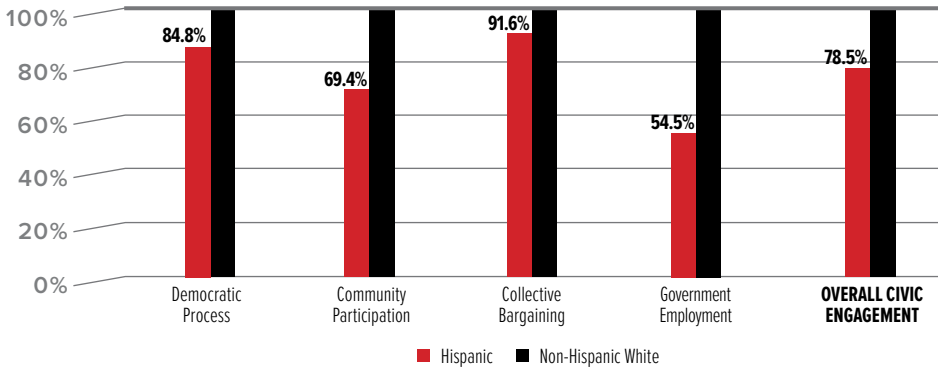


The Victimization and Mental Anguish component (30% of Social Justice) index value is 85% in 2020 compared to 56% in 2015, indicating that this component contributes to inequality in the Hispanic community. **With the exceedingly low value of 13%, the Prisoners under Sentence of Death variable is by far the dominant index among these variables.**

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – 10%

In the Kansas City region, the Civic Engagement Sub-Index for the Hispanic Equality Index is 78.5% in 2020 compared to 72.7% in 2019 and 61.0% in 2015. At the national level, the Civic Engagement Sub-Index for the 2020 Hispanic Equality Index is 70.9%. **This index value illustrates that Hispanic people are less civically engaged than non-Hispanic Whites locally, as well as less civically engaged than their national counterparts.** Figure 9 summarizes the index values of the Sub-Index and each of its components, with the bold horizontal gray bar giving a point of reference as to how the non-Hispanic White population is faring on the same components.

Two variables that serve as major indicators of Civic Engagement are the Percentage of U.S. Citizens 18 and Over Registered Voters and the Percentage of Workers 16 and Older

FIGURE 9: *Contributing Factors to the Hispanic Civic Engagement Sub-Index*

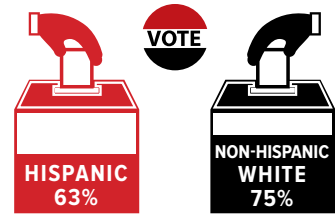
Who Work in the Private Nonprofit Sector. In 2020, findings show an inequality in registered voters (63% of Hispanic people and 75% of non-Hispanic White people) and an equality of participation in the workforce within the private nonprofit sector at 8%.

Democratic Process (40% of Civic Engagement).

The Democratic process component is calculated from one variable: the Percentage of Registered Voters from the Population of U.S. Citizens 18 and over. **The index value for this component is 85%.**

There are differences between Missouri and Kansas regarding the Democratic Process component. In Missouri, for Hispanic people the index score is 96%, while in Kansas it is 71%.

U.S. CITIZENS REGISTERED TO VOTE (DATA FROM 2020 ELECTION)



CONCLUSION

The Kansas City Hispanic Equality Index of 83% in 2020 reveals that much work still must be done for the Hispanic populations to achieve equality and fare as well as non-Hispanic White populations. However, the Equality Index improved from 77% in 2019.

All five sub-indices increased over 2019 levels. However, the Economic Index is below 70% and the Education, Social Justice, and Civic Engagement Indexes remain below 80%. The importance of continued assessment to determine whether strategies to improve equality are making a meaningful difference cannot be overstated.

TO ACCESS THE COMPLETE 2020 BLACK/WHITE AND HISPANIC/WHITE EQUALITY INDEXES, PLEASE VISIT THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER KANSAS CITY'S WEBSITE:

<https://www.ulkc.org/social-justice>



1 National Urban League. (2020). *State of Black America Unmasked: 2020 Hispanic-White Equality Index*[©]. Author. <https://soba.iamempowered.com/sites/soba.iamempowered.com/files/NUL-SOBA-2020-H-W-Index-web.pdf>

2 Fetal death refers to the spontaneous intrauterine death of a fetus at any time during pregnancy. Fetal deaths later in pregnancy (at 20 weeks of gestation or more, or 28 weeks or more, for example) are sometimes referred to as stillbirths.

ACHIEVING EQUALITY FOR THE LATINO COMMUNITY MEANS ADDRESSING EXISTING EQUITY GAPS

JANET MURGUÍA, J.D.
President and CEO, UnidosUS



I was born and raised in Kansas City, Kansas, and I am deeply proud of my hometown. In my role as President and CEO of UnidosUS, the largest Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, I have worked to bring attention to Hispanic communities in the Midwest, including the Kansas City area, and others that are not as well-known as those in California, Texas, Florida, and the deep South. That is why I so appreciate the work of partners like the National Urban League and the Urban League of Greater Kansas City, who have helped put the spotlight on our community through their highly-acclaimed report, the Hispanic/White Equality Index.

The Urban League's 2020 Equality Index for Hispanic Kansas City is one of the most comprehensive examinations of the state of the community in recent memory. The situation for Latinos in the Kansas City area mirrors the situation for Hispanics nationwide: We are still far from achieving equity, especially in areas such as education, health, social justice, and the economy. In fact, the Index concludes that Hispanics have achieved little progress from 2015 to 2019.

What makes this lack of progress even more alarming is that the community in the Kansas City area, like it is nationally, is growing rapidly. In fact, according to the Index, the Latino community grew 10% from 2015 to 2019 and accounted for all the growth in the Kansas City area in that period. Nationally, there are now more than 60 million Hispanics in this country, nearly one in five Americans; for those under 18, one in four.

Because of their rapid growth and youth, Latinos will play a critical role in this country's future. By the year 2030, one in three new workers in the American workforce will be Latino. The young Latinos of today are the workers, entrepreneurs, and taxpayers of tomorrow.

That makes it even more urgent for our country to address inequality. If we don't, young people from the Latino and other communities of color will not be able to contribute as much as they want or should. And to put us on the path to equality, our focus in 2021 should be on closing the gaps that continue to persist between our communities and White Americans. This will take efforts at the national, state, and community levels.

The Index shows that Latino families in the Kansas City area are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-Hispanic Whites. The same holds true for Latino families nationally. As such,

UnidosUS's advocacy work in this area has focused on getting policymakers in Washington to strengthen and expand proven and effective anti-poverty policies.

One of those policies is the Child Tax Credit (CTC). While the CTC has been in place since 1997, the CTC was significantly expanded, including a near doubling of the credit itself, in President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act, which was passed by Congress this year (2021). The legislation also allowed families to begin receiving advance payments in the summer. As a result, in just one month, one million Latino children were lifted out of poverty, and the poverty rate for Hispanic families dropped four points. One way we can close the poverty gap is to make the expansion of the CTC permanent and also expand its equally effective counterpart, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Another example of a lingering gap is in health. The Index found that Hispanics in the Kansas City area are far less likely to have health insurance than non-Hispanics. Nationally, Latinos continue to be the group most likely to be uninsured. The consequences of this lack of access to healthcare means that Latinos both in Kansas City and nationally are more likely to be in poorer health. This became tragically evident during the pandemic, when Latinos and other people of color were disproportionately hard hit by COVID-19. Latinos overall are twice as likely to get COVID, four times as likely to be hospitalized for it, and three times as likely to die from it.

One of the great success stories of the Affordable Care Act is that it has helped more than four million Latinos get healthcare coverage for the first time, both through the exchange and through Medicaid expansion at the state level. It is time for the Kansas legislature to drop its decade-long opposition and finally implement Medicaid expansion. This will have an immediate and positive impact on closing the healthcare gap in the Greater Kansas City area.

And finally, we need to do more to help support the community-based organizations such as local Urban Leagues and UnidosUS Affiliates—such as El Centro in Kansas City, Kansas, and the Guadalupe Center in Kansas City, Missouri—who are helping families and communities bridge equity gaps in health, housing, education, civic engagement, and jobs every single day. These organizations are on the front lines doing amazing work with limited resources, and they deserve more from the leaders and institutions in the communities they serve.

UnidosUS, previously known as NCLR (National Council of La Raza), is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an affiliate network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels. For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and groups seeking common ground through collaboration and who share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information about UnidosUS, please visit www.unidosus.org or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY ENOUGH?

A SPECIAL COLLECTION OF
ARTICLES AND OP-EDS

A black and white photograph of a woman and four children on the steps of a wooden house, overlaid with a green tint. A white line graph is superimposed on the image, starting from the bottom left, rising to a peak, falling to a trough, and then rising sharply to an arrowhead pointing towards the top right. The word "ECONOMICS" is written in white capital letters across the center of the image.

ECONOMICS

FOREWORD

WHAT IS BEHIND THE PERSISTENCE OF THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP?

DIONISSI ALIPRANTIS, PH.D. AND DANIEL CARROLL, PH.D.

Most studies of the persistent gap in wealth between Whites and Blacks have investigated the large gap in income earned by the two groups. Those studies generally concluded that the wealth gap was “too big” to be explained by differences in income. We study the issue using a different approach, capturing the dynamics of wealth accumulation over time. We find that the income gap is the primary driver behind the wealth gap and that it is large enough to explain the persistent difference in wealth accumulation. The key policy implication of our work is that policies designed to speed the closing of the racial wealth gap would do well to focus on closing the racial income gap.

Black households in the United States have, on average, considerably less wealth than White households. In 2016, the average wealth of households with a head identifying as Black was \$140,000, while the corresponding level for White-headed households was \$901,000, nearly 6.5 times greater.¹ The fact that Blacks, on average, have considerably less wealth than Whites is troubling, not just because it is an inequality of outcomes, but also because it strongly suggests inequality of opportunity. The economic opportunities provided by wealth range from insuring consumption against disruptions to a household’s disposable income (such as surprise medical expenditures or unemployment spells) to enabling access to housing, good public schools, and postsecondary education.

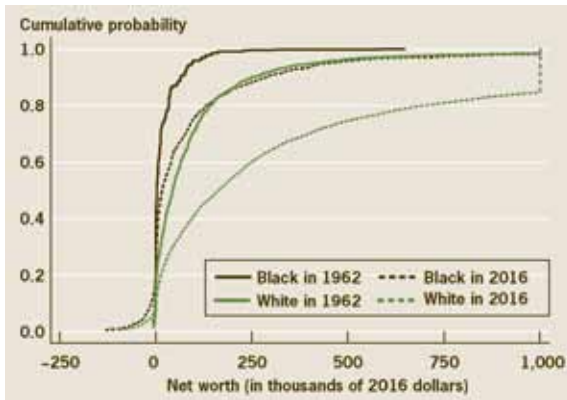
Given the importance of wealth and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States, economists have had a long-standing interest in the racial wealth gap. A focus of economic research has been on understanding which factors contribute to the racial wealth gap and by how much. In this *Commentary*, we review existing evidence and literature on the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites in the United States. We then present new research showing that although differences in savings rates, inheritances, and rates of return on investments have all been suspected as playing a large role in maintaining the racial wealth gap, the gap is primarily the result of a sizeable and persistent income gap.

THE HISTORY OF RACIAL INCOME AND WEALTH GAPS

The current racial wealth gap is the consequence of many decades of racial inequality that imposed barriers to wealth accumulation either through explicit prohibition during slavery or unequal treatment after emancipation. Examples of post-emancipation barriers include legally mandated segregation in schools and housing, discrimination in the labor market, and redlining, which reduced access to capital in Black neighborhoods.

And while the existence of a racial wealth gap may not be altogether surprising, it may be surprising how little the racial wealth gap has changed over the past half century, even after the passage of civil rights legislation. In fact, the 2016 wealth gap is roughly the same as it was in 1962, two years before the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, according to data from the Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF). Average White wealth in 1962² was 7 times that of average Black wealth. The persistence of the racial wealth gap can be seen in Figure 1, which plots the distributions of wealth in 2016 dollars for Black and White households in the years 1962 and 2016. While there has been growth in wealth over time for both racial

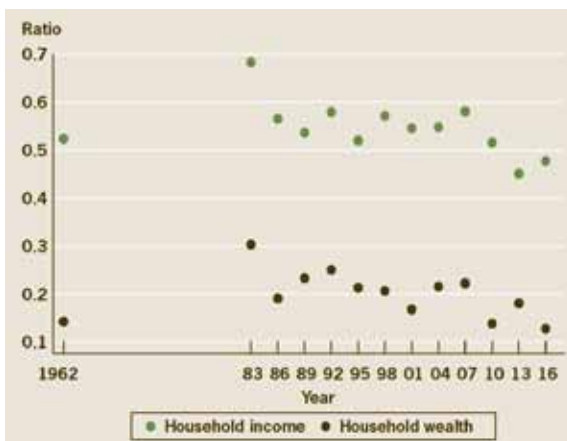
FIGURE 1: *Household Net Worth*



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS FROM SURVEY OF CONSUMER FINANCES

NOTE: The y-axis represents the fraction of each group that has \$X of wealth or less. Increasing wealth is represented by a shift to the right at any level of the y axis or by a shift down at any level of the x axis.

FIGURE 2: *Wealth and Income Ratios of Black and White Means in the Survey of Consumer Finances*



SOURCE: SURVEY OF CONSUMER FINANCES

NOTE: The data we are showing were collected in surveys in the year 1962 and then every three years beginning in 1983.

groups (as evidenced by the rightward shift between the solid and dashed lines), notice that the dashed line corresponding to Black households in 2016 is still to the left of the solid line for White households in 1962. Simply put, over the past 50 years, the distribution of Black wealth has not even “caught up” to the distribution of White wealth in 1962.

Some of the similarity in wealth ratios between 1962 and 2016 relates to timing. The Great Recession had a larger impact on average Black wealth than on White wealth. Figure 2 plots Black wealth as a fraction of White wealth for different years of the SCF. There is a noticeable drop in the ratio after 2007, a dip that has not fully been undone even 10 years later. However, the wealth gap is far from closing even if we focus only on the years leading up to the Great Recession: The wealth ratio rose only from 14 percent to 22 percent between 1962 and 2007.

WHAT COULD BE BEHIND THE WEALTH GAP?

The wealth gap might simply be the result of a historical wealth gap that was so large it hasn't yet had time to close. As we have seen from the 1962 data, Black households were much poorer than White households at that time. Even if all racial discrimination had ended in the 1960s, these wealth differences would not have disappeared instantly. Wealth takes time to accumulate. However, it is possible that other factors have kept the wealth levels of Blacks and Whites from converging, and researchers have investigated the influence of several of these. Specifically, the possible obstacles to wealth equalization that have been studied are savings rates, inheritances, rates of return on investments, and income. If Blacks and Whites differ on any of these dimensions, it could explain the persistence of the wealth gap.

Differences in Rates of Return on Investments

If White households earn more from their savings than do Black households, the different rates of return could contribute to the persistence of the wealth gap. Over time, initial differences in wealth would be compounded, assuming not all additional gains are consumed. Gittleman and Wolff (2004) examine three survey years of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), 1984, 1989, and 1994, and find little evidence that Black households earned lower returns on the same assets as White households. However, they do find that the portfolios held by Black households were more concentrated in low-average-return assets.

Table 1 displays the average share of asset types held across race and years from 1984 to 1994. First, we might compare the percentages of Black and White households that hold each type of asset (columns 1 and 2). Notice that White households hold a larger fraction of each asset category than do Black households. For example, 64 percent of White households hold home equity, while only 38 percent of Black households have wealth in the form of home equity.

Second, we might compare the types of assets Black and White households hold (columns 3 and 4). This comparison shows that the assets of White households are more concentrated in real estate, business, and stocks. These assets tend to be riskier than the other categories, but they also provide a higher average return.

Table 2 displays the same information for 2015 and shows that, despite some improvement in the fractions of asset ownership by Black households, the same portfolio imbalances exist in the recent data.

One explanation for the higher concentration of low-average-return assets in Black households' portfolios could be those households' lower wealth levels. Higher returns are associated with higher risk, and the less wealth a household has, the less risk it may be willing to take with its investments.

TABLE 1: *Black and White Wealth Averages, 1984–1994*

	Percent holding asset		Average percent of assets	
	White	Black	White	Black
Home equity	64	38	31	49
Other real estate	21	7	17	9
Farm or business	13	2	17	9
Stock	32	8	13	5
Checking and savings	85	45	14	12
Vehicles	87	58	6	14
Other savings	26	14	5	9
Debt	49	44	3	6

SOURCE: MAURY GITTLEMAN AND EDWARD N. WOLFF. 2004. "RACIAL DIFFERENCES IN PATTERNS OF WEALTH ACCUMULATION." *THE JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCES*, 39(1): 193–227

Note: Gittleman and Wolff average data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics across the years 1984, 1989, and 1994.

TABLE 2: *Black and White Wealth Averages, 2015*

	Percent holding asset		Average percent of assets	
	White	Black	White	Black
Home equity	65	42	27	23
Other real estate	17	6	6	2
Farm or business	9	3	4	1
Stock	20	2	6	1
Checking and savings	86	56	15	10
Vehicles	87	76	20	32
Other savings	17	10	3	4
Debt	49	54	19	27

SOURCE: PANEL STUDY OF INCOME DYNAMICS, 2015

The magnitudes of differences in inheritances have been found to be large. Avery and Rendall (2002) use the 1989 SCF to document that far fewer Black households reported receiving an inheritance than Whites and that, of those who did, the average value was about five times smaller than that of their White counterparts. Other studies find that differences in intergenerational transfers, like differences in returns, are not the largest driver of the racial wealth gap.³ Menchik and Jianakoplos (1997) estimate that between 10 percent and 20 percent of the racial wealth gap can be accounted for by inheritances, while Gittleman and Wolff (2004) find that if Black households had the same inheritances as White households, the wealth gap would have closed by an additional 5 percentage points. However, differences in inheritances do not appear to drive the racial wealth gap simply because so few households, whether Black or White, receive what could be considered “large” inheritances (Hendricks, 2001).

While portfolio differences are real and impactful, these data suggest that portfolio differences are not the most significant factor contributing to the racial wealth gap. Gittleman and Wolff estimate that over 1984–1994 the wealth gap would have closed by only an additional 4 percentage points if Black households had held the same portfolios as White households.

Differences in Intergenerational Transfers

Another mechanism that could explain the large gap between Black and White wealth is inheritances. If White households had more wealth in the past than did Black households and bequeathed their estates to their children, we should expect the wealth gap to persist for several generations.

Differences in Labor Income

Returning to Figure 2, notice that there is also a sizeable gap between the average income earned by White households and the average earned by Black households: The ratio of labor income between Black and White households is roughly 52 percent in 1962, and it reaches only 58 percent in 2007 before falling steeply after the Great Recession.

Early studies hypothesized that this income gap could be the principal factor responsible for keeping the wealth gap large (Terrell, 1971, Blau and Graham, 1990, Altonji and Doraszelski, 2005, Barsky et al., 2002). However, those studies generally concluded that the wealth gap was “too big” to be explained by the income gap (based on statistical methods that predict wealth as a function of observable characteristics). It seems difficult to imagine that the observed income gap could support such a large wealth gap: Whites having twice the income of Blacks does not seem to imply that Whites should have five to ten times the wealth of Blacks.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

The studies cited above use statistical models to predict wealth based upon observable characteristics. The studies then decompose the drivers of the wealth gap by predicting the wealth of White households using the expected wealth equation for Blacks.

Because the relationships between observable characteristics and wealth are estimated over short periods of time in those studies, they are likely underestimating the importance of initial conditions and income disparities for future wealth. However, the way these initial conditions and disparities interact with other factors over time—referred to as “dynamics”—is likely to matter a great deal. To see why, consider that current labor income (or a measure of several recent observations of labor income) may not be strongly related to the current amount of wealth a household owns. Typically, wealth takes a considerable amount of time to accumulate, and so it could be many years before a household has a high level of wealth even if it earns a high income now. Thus, the degree to which labor income should be related to wealth over a short time horizon is not clear.

In a recent research paper, we approach the problem from a different angle (Aliprantis et al., 2018a). We construct and calibrate an economic model of savings to understand the role each of the above mechanisms plays in maintaining the racial wealth gap. Our modeling approach is different from the previous literature because it accounts for dynamics. This approach contrasts with the statistical techniques typically employed in the literature, as these tend to represent a snapshot at one point in time.

In our model, households have many motivations for saving. They save for retirement and to leave an inheritance for their children; they save to insure against sudden fluctuations in their

labor income; and they save to earn returns from the market. Households also save to insure their ability to consume if they live for an unexpectedly long time.

We first carefully calibrate our model, which means that we find parameters for our model such that the predictions it makes about each of the above mechanisms matches important statistics we observe in the data. Having made sure that our model makes reasonable predictions about the mechanisms believed to contribute to the wealth gap, we then allow our model to make predictions about the types of wealth gaps we should observe if one mechanism is changed at a time or if multiple mechanisms are changed together. We focus on the following questions: Are the observed racial income and wealth gaps compatible with each other? Which factors make the largest contribution to the racial wealth gap?

We answer these questions by starting Black and White households in our model with the wealth observed in the 1962 data. From these initial conditions of high wealth inequality between racial groups, we then input into the model a labor income gap taken from the data, assuming that the income gap will close in the future at the rate observed between 1962 and 2007.

We find that one factor accounts for the racial wealth gap almost entirely by itself: the racial income gap. Our results stand in contrast to the results of earlier studies that focus on a single point in time and find that the wealth gap is too large for the income gap to explain. The reason that our study comes to a different conclusion is that it takes into account the dynamic nature of wealth accumulation.⁴

What do we mean when we say that the labor income gap can account for the racial wealth gap? First, our model predicts that income and wealth will have a relationship in the future like the one we observe today. Our model predicts that, starting from 1962, it would take 259 years for the ratio of Black and White mean wealth to reach 0.90.

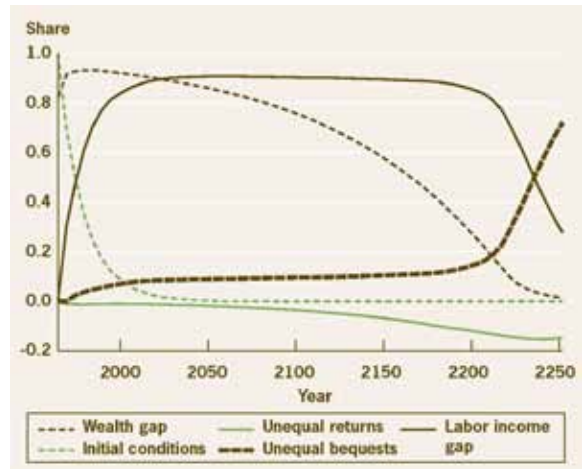
Second, changing the labor income gap in the model changes the wealth gap dramatically. For example, when we remove the labor income gap in our model, meaning Black and White households immediately earn the same income from their labor from 1962 onward, the Black-to-White wealth ratio reaches 90 percent by 2007.

Third, other factors we might have suspected as playing major roles in maintaining the racial wealth gap pale in comparison to the role of the labor income gap. For example, when our model makes predictions under a gap in returns to investment as large as the gap in labor income, we find little change. The same is true for equalizing the inheritance process.

Figure 3 decomposes the wealth gap at each point in time into its contributing factors as generated by our model. As one would expect, initial conditions play an important role early

on. Regardless of the different factors we test, it takes time to undo the extreme racial wealth inequality present in 1962. Over time, however, the model puts less weight on the initial disparity for propagating the racial wealth gap and more weight on persistent systemic differences in economic opportunity. Our model predicts that by 1977 the gap in labor income is a larger contributor to the wealth gap than initial inequality, and by 1990 the labor income gap accounts for more than 80 percent of the wealth gap. The labor income gap remains the dominant factor until far in the future, when the racial wealth gap is nearly closed.

FIGURE 3: *Contribution of Factors to Wealth Gap Over Time*



SOURCE: AUTHORS' CALCULATIONS FROM SURVEY OF CONSUMER FINANCES

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Our study offers a new perspective on the racial wealth gap by capturing the dynamics of wealth accumulation. While our study is only one contribution in the broader literature on the racial wealth gap, our analysis supports the conclusion that the racial labor income gap is the primary driver behind the large and persistent difference in average wealth between Black and White households.

The key policy implication of our work is that policies designed to speed the closing of the racial wealth gap would do well to focus on closing the racial income gap. Of course, this focus leads to another broad set of questions surrounding the racial income gap. For example, what is the relative importance of factors such as racial discrimination in the labor market (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004), incarceration policies (Neal and Rick, 2014), and skills (Neal and Johnson, 1996) in maintaining the racial income gap? Even more broadly, social scientists since Wilson (1997) have focused on the role of factors such as deindustrialization, neighborhoods, and schools in the persistence of the racial income gap. Recent findings that the intergenerational transmission of income is lower for Blacks than for their White counterparts at all levels of income (Chetty et al., 2018), and that the same is true for neighborhood quality regardless of wealth (Aliprantis et al., 2018b), suggest that policies successfully addressing the racial labor income and wealth gaps will have to address a broad set of issues.

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Economic Commentary is published by the Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. *Economic Commentary* is also available on the Cleveland Fed's website at www.clevelandfed.org/research To receive an e-mail when a new *Economic Commentary* is posted, subscribe at www.clevelandfed.org/subscribe-EC

1. Survey of Consumer Finances. The difference in median wealth was even starker: \$16,000 compared to \$163,000, or 10 times greater.
2. The 1962 data are a merger of two other data sets, the 1962 Survey of Financial Characteristics of Consumers and the 1963 Survey of Changes in Family Finances. These data are available from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.
3. The studies in this literature were conducted on data from roughly the same time period as the studies on returns.
4. See O'Flaherty (2015) for a summary of this area of the literature and Ashman and Neumuller (2018) for a related analysis.

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WITHOUT REPARATIONS, EQUITY IS AN ELUSIVE GOAL

WILL BOWLES
MICKEY DEAN

In recent years, the issue of reparations for Black people in this country has gone from discussions among a few long-time proponents of the concept to an essential component of most mainstream deliberations where the issue of Black progress is on the agenda. More people are beginning to understand that the socioeconomic gaps between Blacks and Whites cannot be closed absent some type of massive intervention on behalf of Black people. The standard proposed remedies to address the disparities—affirmative action, diversity and inclusion, civil rights legislation, enterprise zones, etc.—have not had any appreciable effect on placing Blacks and Whites on equal

footing with regard to achieving prosperity. In spite of these efforts, equality among the races has proven elusive. In many regards, Black people are as far behind today as we were decades ago. As a result, many see reparatory justice as the only answer.

WHAT ARE REPARATIONS?

Reparations means repair. The goal of reparatory justice is to compensate the descendants of enslaved Africans in this country for over 250 years of brutal enslavement, followed by another 150 years of legal apartheid. The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (NCOBRA), the leading reparations formation in the country, defines reparations as:

The process of repairing, healing, and restoring a people who were injured, due to their group identity, in violation of their fundamental human rights by a government, corporation, institution or individual.

The injuries suffered by Black people during our sojourn in this country are well known. The economic and social disparities that resulted from those injuries are long-standing and certainly nothing new. They existed when we were enslaved, during the Jim Crow era, during the civil rights and Black Power movements, and they exist today. The disparities manifest themselves in just about any comparative data that might be examined—education, economic empowerment, adequate affordable housing, home ownership, healthcare, jobs, criminal justice and police brutality, political disenfranchisement, mass incarceration, environmental racism, and more. One of the most telling and enduring vestiges of slavery and the period thereafter of horrific oppression of Black people is the wealth gap that currently exists between Black and White Americans. According to a study done in 2016, Black families have an average net worth of \$17,150, compared to a White family's average net worth of \$171,000. This wealth gap exists at every income level.

There has been some confusion as to what constitutes real compensatory justice. Three basic criteria have been established in the reparations movement to measure whether a proposed remedy is reparations. The first is that the remedy must be defined and agreed to by those who suffered the injury; that is, Black people who have been adversely affected by the enslavement of Africans and the persistent vestiges of that enslavement. Second, there must be an independent structure to receive and

allocate the resources for restitution and repair. This structure must be based in the Black community and controlled entirely by those in that community. Finally, standard, regular, and ordinary public policy is not reparations. Reparations may take the form of cash payments, land, tax relief, scholarships, community development funds, repatriation to Africa, and other remedies to be determined.

REPARATIONS HISTORY

Black people began to demand reparations before the end of the Civil War. Prior to the conclusion of the war, President Abraham Lincoln instructed General William Sherman to inquire of Southern Black leaders what they wanted upon emancipation that would allow them to become independent and develop prosperous communities. The response was clear—they wanted land. Responding to this demand, President Lincoln ordered General Sherman to devise a plan to appropriate 400,000 acres of land that had been confiscated from the Confederacy and divide it among the newly emancipated families.

Sherman's Special Field Order 15 gave the newly emancipated Blacks the land in 40-acre parcels. The land stretched from Charleston, South Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida, and 30 miles inland. Many Black families moved onto the land and established homesteads. Unfortunately, President Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865. His vice-president, Andrew Johnson, a Confederate sympathizer, rescinded the field order, and the land was returned to its

previous owners. This denied Black families the opportunity to possibly become self-sufficient economically, and to build, accrue, and pass on generational wealth.

The fight for reparatory justice did not end with the repeal of Sherman's field order. The fight for Black reparations has been a continuous one since emancipation. Various individuals and organizations—notably Callie House, Queen Mother Moore, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, and others—have pressed for Black reparations consistently over the years. However, the issue gained significant traction after Ta-Nehisi Coates penned the article “The Case For Reparations,” published in the June 2014 *Atlantic* magazine.

In the 2020 Democratic Party primary, several candidates expressed support for exploring reparations as a remedy for past injustices. Last year, U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas introduced an updated version of HR 40, the reparations legislation originally introduced by the late Michigan U.S. Rep. John Conyers. The new version of the bill calls for a commission to study and develop proposals and remedies to repair the damage done to Black people during slavery and its aftermath. U.S. Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey has introduced similar legislation in the Senate. In April 2021, the House Judiciary Committee voted to move the bill to the House floor for full consideration later this year.

EQUITY IS NOT ENOUGH

It could be argued that an equitable solution to the socioeconomic disadvantages facing

Black people would be to level the playing field in all areas where major disparities occur. What if Black people were given equal access to economic and business development opportunities, equivalent educational institutions with equal funding, equal access to the best job training and jobs, a justice system that fairly enforced all laws and uniform policing in all communities, first-rate healthcare for all citizens regardless of where one resided in the city, and neighborhoods free from the environmental hazards that are so prevalent in Black communities. The list goes on. The problem with this approach is that equitable treatment now without taking into consideration the effects of centuries of brutal oppression and discrimination is simply not adequate to make Black people whole. With regard to the aforementioned wealth gap, one study noted that without major intervention, it would take over 200 years for Blacks to eliminate the gap, and in fact, the wealth gap will continue to expand. Establishing equality between the races in this country will require pursuing policies that exclusively target and assist Black people until such time that the goal of equality is achieved. Reparations are the only intervention that has any chance of achieving this goal.

Reparations for Black people is an issue whose time has come. Any discussion that purports to consider justice and equality for Black people in the long term but does not include reparations is simply not honestly addressing the problem.

CAPITALIZING A BLACK FINANCIAL INSTITUTION: WHY SO HARD?

AJAMU K. WEBSTER, P.E.

For the past 11 years, I have chaired a team of committed volunteers who are working to charter a community development credit union in the mostly African-American community housed in Kansas City's eastside. WeDevelopment Federal Credit Union will be a community-owned, not-for-profit financial institution whose mission is to build members' and community wealth for residents who live, work, or worship in our catchment area. It will be a credit union built by the people and for the people, serving our members with innovative deposit and loan products, combined with financial training that begins in the schools and extends to families and business owners.

Although it is much needed, starting a new African American-led financial institution is risky when considering the rapid decline in the number of Black-owned banks in recent years. Case in point, there were 50 Black-owned banks in 2001 (not including credit unions), and today there are only 22 banks remaining. That's 11 banks fewer than existed in 1906.

Capitalizing WeDevelopment FCU has been a very difficult undertaking, primarily due to the lack of household wealth in our community. According to a 2019 report from the Institute for Policy Studies, "The

median Black family owns \$3,600 – just 2 percent of the \$147,000 of wealth the median White family owns." This gulf in wealth has been termed the "Wealth Gap." This very low net worth reflects difficulties that African Americans face when working to accumulate and transfer wealth. A capital depleted community has little savings to support financial institutions, which helps to explain Black bank closures and WeDevelopment's capitalization challenges. But why, after 400 years, do we find African Americans stuck at the bottom rung of the economic ladder? Much has been reported in mainstream media on the 10:1 wealth gap between Whites and Blacks, but rarely does anyone address the essential question: What caused the Wealth Gap, and why is it still a thing?

THE "WEALTH GAP"

Contrary to the popular American narrative, the White asset-based middle class did not emerge on its own. Federal government seeded their accumulated wealth through policies like the Homestead Act of 1862, The New Deal, the GI Bill, the FHA, the Wagner Act, and others. These federal policies provided free land, capital, and legal protection from theft and fraud. Also, these laws attracted millions of European immigrants to America, providing them with land and capital to create and pass generational wealth. Concurrently, these same federal policies, by design and implementation, severely restricted or denied benefits to African Americans. Additionally, federal actions such as the withdrawal of Union troops from the South

and Jim Crow laws left African Americans without legal protection and vulnerable to theft, robbery, fraud, and White mob violence.

Like compound interest in reverse, anti-Black laws and predatory practices have robbed African Americans of wealth, with generational consequences. The economic value of this stolen wealth is quantifiable. In his book, *The Black Tax*, Shawn Rochester aggregated scholarly reports that documented the economic impact of slavery and discrimination and their effects on wealth accumulation. The book examines the staggering financial cost from emancipation to present day to answer the question of how, after 400 years, more than 40 million African Americans own less than 2% of U.S. wealth. As indicated in the book, the amount of wealth transferred from Black to White hands is nearly beyond comprehension. Below are but a few highlights from *The Black Tax*:

1. The value of 246 years of expropriated African labor (enslavement) - **\$50 Trillion**
2. In 1862, U.S. Congress passed the Homestead Act, which distributed 246 million acres of free land to 1.6 million White families over a 60-year period. Researchers determined that 93 million Americans today are direct beneficiaries of this Act. - **\$438 Billion to \$1 Trillion**
3. The New Deal's Social Security Act exclusion of agricultural and domestic workers effectively excluded African Americans. - **\$143 Billion**

4. In 1935 Congress passed the Wagner Act, which legalized labor organizations, but African Americans were specifically excluded from it. - **\$4.4 Trillion**
5. The GI Bill, 1935 to 1965, excluded 98% of eligible African American veterans - **\$45 Billion**
6. Separate but "equal" education - **\$3 Trillion**
7. Jim Crow Society (sharecropping, convict leasing, land theft, white violence, etc.) - **\$15 Trillion**
8. Housing discrimination (98% of African Americans excluded from FHA Home Loans) - **\$4.8 Trillion**

Among other egregious consequences, slavery was a 100% tax on Black labor. This Black Tax created enormous wealth that capitalized agribusiness, shipbuilding, construction, banking, insurance, and many other industries at the expense of enslaved African people. Jim Crow laws regulated Black life; restricted or prevented access to capital; severely limited market access; controlled and depressed wages; and criminalized Black life. The criminalization of Black life facilitated the exploitive system called convict leasing (slavery by another name). White-owned private businesses followed Jim Crow laws, excluding Black workers or hiring at discriminatory wages while unions excluded Black workers or relegated them to lower waged jobs. The FHA, the New Deal, and the GI Bill all excluded African Americans for decades, resulting in trillions of dollars of lost wealth.

In short, the “WEALTH GAP,” this 10:1 ratio of White to Black wealth; this phenomenon responsible for shortage in capital to support Black businesses and financial institutions; this barrier to generational wealth transfer, **is the intentional product of federal policy.** This is what institutional racism looks like.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION AS THE SOLUTION

Initiatives for ending procurement and workplace discrimination have been in place since the 1970s. The current iteration of these initiatives comes under the heading of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion programs (EDI). The goal of EDI initiatives is to ensure that all people have access to job opportunities, procurement spending, and decision-making in the public and private sectors. EDI initiatives are necessary and important in their own merit and should be supported by executive management in both the public and private sectors. However, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Programs are NOT FIT to reverse damages caused by three centuries of anti-Black, pro-White public policies. Despite intentions of EDI programs, their focus is too broad and financial commitment is too small to overcome current discriminatory practices

against African Americans, let alone offset the compounded effects of historical economic exploitation. Unpopular as it may sound to some, what’s needed is **TARGETED, RACE-SPECIFIC PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES** that capitalize, grow, and protect wealth accumulation of African Americans. This is the quickest and most effective way to close the wealth gap. The financial and political tools needed to fuel this effort can come in the form of federal, state, and local reparations for African Americans. This is what restorative justice looks like.

IN CONCLUSION

In the meantime, we will continue the work of building an African American-owned credit union that will provide access to capital, financial tools, and financial literacy. These resources can provide much needed relief to a community targeted by predatory lenders and abandoned by mainstream banks. But alas, our project is only a noble effort to treat symptoms. The cure can come only in the form of government infusions of significant capital through policies designed to seed, grow, transfer, and protect African-American wealth accumulation. This would be a **REAL DEAL** to close the Wealth Gap and provide real and long overdue justice.

WHY EQUITY DEMANDS ACTION

CHASE WAGNER

The spirit of entrepreneurship belongs to all Americans, and it's up to all of us to ensure that we take demanding action to provide just, impartial, and fair structures of society for all.

It's the often-cited, often-idealized and often-inequitable American dream. A person lifts themselves up through hard work and dedication to realize their dreams and embody the entrepreneurial spirit. But the starting point for that hard work hasn't been, and still isn't, equal for everyone. Equitable economic prosperity continues to be outside of our reach because of our history of segregation and racism.

As Richard Rothstein explains in *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*: "Parents' economic status is commonly replicated in the next generation, so once government prevented African Americans from fully participating in the mid-twentieth-century free labor market, depressed incomes became, for many, a multigenerational trait...Because parents can bequeath assets to their children, the racial wealth gap is even more persistent down through the generations than income differences...Once segregation was established, seemingly race-neutral policies reinforced it to make remedies even more difficult."

As Mr. Rothstein demonstrates in his focus on residential housing, the very real impact of early segregation policies continues to be felt today and cannot be undone simply with new race-neutral policies. It's not just housing, however; the ecosystem that surrounds entrepreneurs and small business owners also struggles with the same legacy.

Look at what happened in the first round of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. As Black business owners were being disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, with an estimated 41% closing their doors for good between February and April 2020,² less than 2% of Black-owned businesses received the desperately-needed loans offered as part of the CARES Act. In contrast, of the 4.9 million loans that totaled more than \$521 billion in government aid, 83% went to White-owned businesses.³

Why was there such a massive difference in who received the financial assistance? The application process for the PPP was run through commercial banks, where lending primarily benefited the companies that had strong, existing relationships, not the businesses who had never requested a bank loan before.

...less than 2% of Black-owned businesses received the desperately-needed loans offered as part of the CARES Act.

This is why a program like Generating Income for Tomorrow (GIFT) is so important. GIFT provides grants to Black-owned businesses in Kansas City's urban core. Their mission includes a specific interest in businesses that operate in low-income areas, to create more jobs and convert economically disadvantaged areas into areas of economic opportunity. They aim to assist in creating generational wealth, while also reducing instances of poverty-related crime and violence in their communities. In their first year, they have provided \$227,000 in grants to 14 businesses. Of the

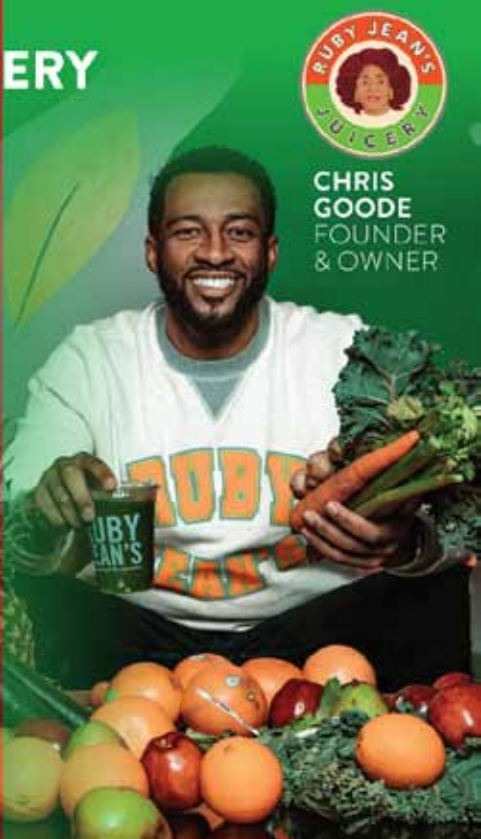
100 businesses that have applied for help from GIFT, 59 had never tried to access capital before. GIFT is directly addressing the disproportionate access to capital that we see in examples like the early days of the PPP.


To address these disproportionate inequities, we must be intentional and be willing to take action like those taken by GIFT. But direct access to financial capital (cash) isn't the only inequity. There are also the gaps in social capital (the networking and access to people and resources) that

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Chris Goode is the founder of Ruby Jean's Juicery based in Kansas City, Missouri. Chris started his company in 2015 to honor the early death of his Grandmother Ruby Jean, who fought a short-lived battle with diabetes. He adamantly believes had she had the knowledge of juicing and a healthy lifestyle that she'd still be alive. Chris has made it his life's work to educate urban youth and integrate the juicing culture in his hometown by locating the flagship Ruby Jean's Kitchen & Juicery in a food desert he grew up near.





CHRIS GOODE
FOUNDER & OWNER



**MAKE BLACK
BUSINESSES
BETTER**



GIFT is directly addressing the disproportionate access to capital that we see in examples like the early days of the PPP.

reflect our country's history of segregation. The ability to start your own business and achieve equitable economic prosperity requires access to a network of resources and understanding how to navigate those resources.

It's a big part of how the partnership between the Urban League of Greater Kansas City and H&R Block can help. The Making Black Businesses Better program focuses on free, personalized coaching and services designed to improve financial management, tax compliance, bookkeeping and payroll, marketing, and credit-building for business owners. The goal of the program is to provide the help that is directly needed for business owners to feel confident seeking access to financial capital, while also connecting them to resources that build their social capital along the way. Data from Block Advisors, a team within H&R Block, confirmed that Black-owned business were seeing long-term, disproportionate impact from

pandemic-related factors, including more than half reporting a revenue decrease of 50% or more compared to only 37% of White business owners seeing the same impact since March 2020. It again underscores the impact of historical discrimination on economic prosperity, as well as the need for programs that are providing help and are actionable in breaking down barriers.

The spirit of entrepreneurship and this American dream is one that belongs to all of us. But providing that opportunity for everyone is a moving target—a difficult dream to capture—and it will take all of us to see our obstacles and act to remove them, before we can realize the equitable economic prosperity everyone deserves.

Picture a future where all small businesses—not just White-owned businesses—are thriving, and the diversity of voices and services and products is improving all our communities east and west, north, and south. It's a future full of hard work and determination, but one in which everyone has equitable access to help. It will take all of us to support the entrepreneurial spirit that fuels the progress towards capturing the American dream we have all been promised.

1 *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein. Copyright © 2017 by Richard Rothstein.

2 *The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Business Owners: Evidence of Early-Stage Losses from the April 2020 Current Population Survey* by Robert W. Fairlie. https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w27309/w27309.pdf

3 The Business of Business: "Black-owned businesses received less than 2% of PPP loans while white-owned businesses received 83%" <https://www.businessofbusiness.com/articles/black-owned-businesses-received-less-than-2-of-ppp-loans-while-whites-received-83/>



KCI AIRPORT PROJECT – THE NUMBERS MISS THE MARK OF TRANSFORMATIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH FOR MINORITIES

KELVIN W. PERRY

On November 7, 2017, Kansas City, Missouri voters overwhelmingly approved construction of a \$1.5 billion single-terminal airport with 76% approval. Among the key promises made in the Black community were new jobs and transformative contracting opportunities for minority businesses.

During the months of August and September leading up to the November 7 citywide vote, the KCI Airport Consortium called on the City Council to establish a minimum MBE utilization and workforce goal of no less than 40% in all facets and phases of the terminal project. The Consortium was comprised of the Black Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City, Black United Front Kansas City Chapter, NAACP Kansas City

Chapter, SCLC of Greater Kansas City, Urban League of Greater Kansas City, and the Urban Summit. On February 9, 2018, in connection with the terminal modernization program at the Kansas City International Airport (KCI-TMP), the City of Kansas City, Missouri and Edgemoor Infrastructure & Real Estate, LLC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was approved by the City Council. The MOU set out the terms and conditions pursuant to which Edgemoor would construct, develop, and deliver the Project to the City. The goals established by the City Council for minority business contracting were less than half the recommendation from the KCI Airport Consortium at 17% for Professional Services and 15% for Construction. The Council set goals for women at 12% and 9%, respectively for Professional Services and Construction.

The goals for minority businesses were enhanced somewhat when on February 28, Edgemoor and the City entered into a Developer Pledge Agreement. Under the Agreement, Edgemoor (in exchange for various City-sponsored contracting incentives) agreed to take commercially reasonable actions to achieve 20% minority participation for both Professional Services and Construction. They also agreed to a 15% across-the-board increase for women.

CURRENT STATUS OF KCI-TMP CONTRACTING

As of August 31, 2021, the KCI-TMP is reported by the City's Civil Rights & Equal Opportunity Department (formerly known as the Human Relations Department or HRD) to be 100% complete as to Professional

Services contracting and 60% complete as to construction. \$80,237,282 in contracts have been awarded for Professional Services. \$885,644,759 in contracts have been granted against a contract value of \$891,025,492 for Construction Services. In total, \$971,262,774 was made available for participation by minority- and women-owned businesses. Of that amount, \$965,882,041 has been awarded.

Black-owned businesses have been awarded \$102,704,380 or **10.6%** of those contracts. Caucasian female-owned firms captured **13.7%** of all contracts for \$132,189,886 in awards.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACTING

Black-owned firms received \$11,141,416 in Professional Services contracts, or **13.9%** of the Airport Professional Services contract. This is **14.3%** below African American/Black representation in the general population of Kansas City, Missouri at **28.2%**.¹

Hispanic/Latino firms were awarded no Professional Services contracts, **10.6%**¹ below the group's representation in the general population.

Asian American-owned firms garnered \$5,299,385 in awards, representing **6.6%** of the Professional Services contract total. As a group, Asian Americans exceeded their representation in the general population of **2.7%**¹ by **3.9%** on the Professional Services contract.

Native American-owned businesses captured \$389,677 in contracts, representing

.49% of all project Professional Service awards. This is approximately the same percentage as Native American representation in the Kansas City population at **.4%**.¹

Caucasian female-owned businesses were awarded the largest share of Professional Services contracts at \$12,177,615 or **15.7%** of the total. Caucasian females are not tracked for census purposes as a minority group and are included with their male counterparts in a category designated as White. Whites (non-Hispanic) comprise **55.2%**¹ of the Kansas City population. As a group they were awarded **78%** of the Professional Services contract on the KCI-TMP.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST PROFESSIONAL SERVICE GOALS

As mentioned previously, two sets of goals were established for Professional Services on the KCI-TMP—one set by HRD as obligatory and another set voluntarily agreed to by the Developer. They are as follows:

HRD Base goals: MBE 17% WBE 12%
Developer goals: MBE 20% WBE 15%

Table 1 indicates overall the Professional Service contract is outperforming the HRD goals by 3 percentage points for MBE and 4 points for WBE. The Developer MBE goals have been met, while the WBE goals have been exceeded by 1 percentage point.

CONSTRUCTION SERVICES CONTRACTING

Of \$885,644,759 in construction contracts awarded, \$90,562,939 went to firms

TABLE 1

	HRD Goals %	Contract Dollar Value to Meet HRD Goals	Awarded to Date \$	Awarded to Date %	Total \$ Remaining to Meet HRD Goals
All Contracts		\$ 80,237,282	\$ 80,237,282	100%	
MBEs	17%	\$ 13,640,338	\$ 16,098,947	20%	-\$2,458,609
WBEs	12%	\$ 9,628,474	\$ 12,909,146	16%	-\$3,280,672
M/WBEs combined	29%	\$ 23,268,812	\$ 29,008,093	36%	-\$5,739,281

SOURCE: KCMO HRD 2021 AUGUST 31 KCI-TMP PROFESSIONAL SERVICE BREAKDOWN REPORT

owned by Black males and only \$691,931 went to firms owned by Black females. In total, the awards to Black businesses thus far represent **10.3%** of the contracting dollars awarded on the construction project. Contracting with Blacks is **17.9%** below their **28.2%**¹ representation in the general population—the largest disparity for any racial ethnic group tracked by HRD reporting on the KCI-TMP.

Hispanic/Latino male-owned and female-owned firms have been awarded \$31,983,723 and \$1,720,992, respectively. These amounts represent **3.8%** of the contracted dollars for the project. With Hispanics comprising approximately **10.6%**¹ of Kansas City's population, the group fared better than Black-owned firms. Their participation is only **6.8%** below their representation in the population.

Asian American male-owned firms garnered \$3,152,208 construction awards, representing **.36%** of the construction contract total. Asian Americans make up **2.7%**¹ of the population of Kansas City, thereby performing at a deficit of their representation by **2.34%** on the KCI Airport Construction Project.

Native American male-owned businesses received \$31,022,806 in construction contracts, representing **3.5%** of all project

construction awards. Comprising only **.4%**¹ of Kansas City's population, Native Americans are the lone minority group of color to meet or exceed their representation level in the general population in contract performance on the KCI-TMP Construction Project. At present, Native American participation exceeds their representation in the population by **3.1%**.

Caucasian female-owned businesses captured \$120,012,271 in construction contracts. This contracting level is barely below the combined participation of Black and Hispanic males of \$122,546,662. It represents **13.6%** of all construction contracting on the construction project. For census purposes, Caucasian women are not tracked as a racial or ethnic minority group and are included with their male counterparts in a category designated as White. Whites (non-Hispanic) comprise **55.2%**¹ of the Kansas City population. As a group they have been awarded **83%** of the Construction Services contract on the KCI-TMP.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTING GOALS

The two sets of goals for Construction Services on the KCI-TMP Airport Project follow.

TABLE 2

	HRD Goals %	Contract Dollar Value to Meet HRD Goals	Awarded to Date \$	Awarded to Date %	Total \$ Remaining to Meet HRD Goals
All Contracts		\$891,025,492	\$ 885,644,759	99%	
MBEs	15%	\$ 133,653,824	\$ 156,721,675	18%	-\$23,067,851
WBEs	9%	\$ 80,192,294	\$ 123,224,826	14%	-\$43,032,532
M/WBEs combined	24%	\$ 213,846,118	\$ 279,946,501	32%	-\$66,100,383

SOURCE: KCMO HRD 2021 AUGUST 31 KCI-TMP CONSTRUCTION SERVICE BREAKDOWN REPORT

HRD Base goals: MBE 15% WBE 9%
Developer goals: MBE 20% WBE 15%

Table 2 shows the Construction project is outperforming the HRD goals by 3% for MBE and 5% for WBE. The goals were exceeded for WBEs by more than \$43,000,000; for MBEs by \$23,000,000.

Table 3 shows the Construction project is short of meeting the Developer Pledge goals of 20% MBE by more than twice as much as is needed to meet the 15% WBE goal.

KCI-TMP WORKFORCE GOALS AND PERFORMANCE

The workforce goals established for the KCI-TMP construction service contract follow.

HRD: Minority 10% Women 2%
Developer: Minority 20% Women 2.75%

As of August 31, 2021, the HRD and the Developer Pledge goals are being met or exceeded for the KCI-TMP, with employment of minorities at 20% and women at

7.43%. Blacks make up only 9.56% of the construction workforce and 12.35% of Kansas City residents.

Only Caucasians and Native Americans enjoyed representation in the workforce exceeding their representation in the general Kansas City population. Blacks were employed at a level 18.64% below their composition in the general population.

Table 4 provides the breakout of construction workforce in hours and percentages for the project by racial and ethnic composition.

BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBERS HELP KCI-TMP

While the KCI-TMP proved not to be transformative for Black businesses and workers, members of the Black Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City contributed greatly at the participation levels allowed. Twenty-one firms performed on the project—seven Professional Service providers and fourteen Constructors.

TABLE 3

Developer's Pledge Goals %	Contract Dollar Value to Meet Developer's Pledge Goals	Awarded to Date \$	Awarded to Date %	Total \$ Remaining to Meet Developer's Pledge Goals
	\$891,025,492	\$885,644,759	99%	
MBEs 20%	\$178,205,098	\$156,721,675	18%	\$21,483,423.40
WBEs 15%	\$133,653,824	\$123,224,826	14%	\$10,428,997.80
M/WBEs 35%	\$311,858,922	\$279,946,501	32%	\$31,912,421.20

SOURCE: KCMO HRD 2021 AUGUST 31 KCI-TMP CONSTRUCTION SERVICE BREAKDOWN REPORT

TABLE 4

Hours	Caucasian	Black/African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian	Native American	Other	Local
2,173,091	1,696,351	207,845	184,809	13,491	20,539	50,056	268,431
% of WF⁴	78.06%	9.56%	8.50%	0.62%	0.95%	2.30%	12.35%
Census % ¹	55.20%	28.20%	10.60%	2.70%	0.40%		
Disparity	22.86%	-18.64%	-2.10%	-2.08%	0.55%		

SOURCE: KCMO HRD 2021 AUGUST 31 KCI-TMP WORKFORCE BREAKDOWN REPORT

Five held prime contracts, and over 55 subcontracts were awarded to the group, and most of them were still underutilized. As a group, the members were awarded **69.18%**⁵ of the contracts that were awarded to Black-owned firms, and **7.36%**⁵ of all contracts awarded on the project.

Of particular note, the Professional Service firms were awarded \$9,144,885; **82%**⁵ of all awards made to Black-owned firms. Their participation represented **11.4%**⁵ of awards made under the contract, and included Black female participation of \$731,531—more dollars awarded to Black females than on the much larger construction contract.

Construction members provided \$61,905,517⁵ of the \$91,562,964 in contracts awarded to Black-owned firms in construction. This represents **68%**⁵ of the dollars awarded to Black firms in construction and **7%**⁵ for the construction project. Also of special significance, two of the firms formed the only Black-led joint venture trade partnership under the general contractor. This has allowed smaller firms to be directly hired onto the project as subcontractors through the JV partners—increasing Black subcontractor participation.

1 U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program July 1, 2019, (V2019)

2 KCMO HRD 2021 August 31 KCI-TMP Professional Service Breakdown Report

3 KCMO HRD 2021 August 31 KCI-TMP Construction Service Breakdown Report

4 KCMO HRD 2021 August 31 KCI-TMP Workforce Breakdown Report

5 BCC Membership Contracts KCI-TMP July 26, 2021 Report

BLACK ENTREPRENEURS ON THE RISE: MORE NEEDED TO ACHIEVE EQUITY

PHILIP GASKIN

For the most part, we have a great thing going here in Kansas City.

We have the country's best barbecue, with legendary figures over the years like Ollie Gates, Henry Perry, and Charlie and Arthur Bryant. We have an arts and culture scene few cities our size have with a world class symphony and entertainment hall. And we have our share of championship sports teams.

But outside of that, there is a lesser-known fact that I'd argue is even more influential: our city is home to a thriving community of Black entrepreneurs who are paving the way for a new generation of business owners. I think of people like Thalia Cherry,¹ who began her own sports clothing line, Cherry Co.; Davyeon Ross,² who co-founded the innovative sports-tech company DDSports; and Ajamu Webster,³ who owns his own engineering firm focused on water infrastructure. Yet if we're to be honest, each of these entrepreneurs is thriving *in spite of* significant barriers that are put in their way by systems large and small.

Our Kauffman Indicators report⁴ found that the rate of startups increased more this past year than in any year since we began tracking this measurement in 1996,

and the gains were mostly made by Black entrepreneurs and other people of color. While that looks like a hopeful statistic on its face, a closer look reveals a potential concern: The number of people who started a business out of necessity rather than choice also went up, particularly among people of color, who also faced higher unemployment rates during the pandemic.

And as we hope to recover from the devastation of the pandemic, we're seeing systemic inequities across the country that are preventing Black people and other people of color, women, and those in rural communities from being able to start and grow their businesses. For example, Black people make up approximately 14.2% of the U.S. population, according to the most recent Census data, but Black businesses comprise only 2.2% of the nation's 5.7 million employer businesses.⁵

That's no surprise given what we know about inequitable access to capital:

- Black-owned businesses are three times less likely to be approved than White businesses;
- Women are 60% less likely to secure funding than men when pitching the same business; and
- Of the **\$69.1 trillion** in global assets under the four major asset classes—including mutual funds, hedge funds, real estate, and private equity—less than 1.3% is invested in firms owned by women, Black Americans, and other people of color.⁶

Of course, the systemic inequity we see in our economy was not caused by the pandemic. Kansas City was an early adopter of the practice of “redlining,”⁷ in which certain areas—unsurprisingly, almost exclusively Black communities—were deemed ineligible for bank loans and insurance. Much of the East Side was redlined in the 1930s, which effectively blocked investment there.



...we're seeing systemic inequities across the country that are preventing Black people and other people of color, women, and those in rural communities from being able to start and grow their businesses.

In many of Kansas City's well-known neighborhoods, Black people were literally forbidden from owning houses—it was actually written into the house's deed.⁸ In one district, the rules of the homeowners association read: “None of the said lots shall be conveyed to, used, owned nor occupied by Negroes as owner or tenants.”

Unfortunately, this shameful history isn't in our rearview mirror—the Troost Divide is still a very real thing.

Now is the time to address this. Let's take a moment and imagine what would happen if we leveled the playing field and removed the systemic barriers that make economic mobility difficult. Let's envision a world in which opportunities are equal and we have an inclusive economy that works for everyone, enabling entrepreneurship among all Americans, regardless of race, gender, and geography.

It's not just about doing the right thing—although that's clearly important. But on an economic level, stronger Black businesses make for stronger economies.

Consider this fact: Black businesses create an average of 10 jobs per company, compared to 23 jobs for non-Black businesses. If Black businesses increased their number of employees to an average of 23, it would create approximately 1.6 million jobs.⁹

We have the chance to develop this environment. Right here, right now. That's what we're doing at the Kauffman Foundation—our grantmaking and

philanthropic work strives to operate through an equity lens that prioritizes funding for those organizations making bold and measurable progress in this space.

Right now, the number of small businesses is growing, and the federal government is working to create an encouraging entrepreneurial environment. To augment this, there are several steps we can take to move the country in the right direction:

- Strengthen access to capital for all entrepreneurs, especially people of color, women, and those in rural communities;
- Rethink how to deploy capital, and do so equitably. Kauffman has launched

a national initiative called the Capital Access Lab¹⁰ that is identifying and funding innovative ways of helping entrepreneurs start and grow businesses; and

- Work with policymakers to strengthen access to opportunity and entrepreneurship in big and small ways, from tackling childhood poverty and expanding access to broadband technology, to eliminating complicated red tape and regulatory measures.

We've made good progress, but there's always more to do. We can take pride in everything Kansas City has to offer while also realizing there's more work to be done.

1 <https://www.kauffman.org/currents/barriers-to-funding-equality-persist-for-black-women/>

2 <https://www.kauffman.org/rethink/davyeon-ross/>

3 <https://www.kauffman.org/currents/the-doors-will-not-be-closed-on-black-entrepreneurs/>

4 https://indicators.kauffman.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/03/2020_Early-Stage-Entrepreneurship-National-Report.pdf

5 <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/to-expand-the-economy-invest-in-black-businesses/>

6 <https://www.kauffman.org/currents/leveraging-entrepreneurship-to-close-racial-wealth-gaps-living-cities/>

7 <https://dashboards.mysidewalk.com/kansas-city-mo-opportunity-zone-prospectus/uneven-development>

8 <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article92156112.html>

9 <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/to-expand-the-economy-invest-in-black-businesses/>

10 <https://www.kauffman.org/capital-access-lab/>

THE BLACK DOLLAR EFFECT

SHAUN STALLWORTH, J.D.

From an early age, we are taught that money equals power. But, if money equals power, and power equals influence, what does that leave Black Americans? Throughout much of American history, the answer was simple: little to nothing. In the 1800s, there were few Black communities with economic vitality: Seneca Village (New York Central Park) and Weeksville, New York (Brooklyn) were two of them, yet they were unsustainable in the face of larger ethnic (White) groups' interests. In the 1900s, pockets of Black Americans thrived. From Tulsa, Oklahoma, (a.k.a. Black Wall Street), to Rosewood, Florida, Black Americans had economic sustainability and a tangible impact in their respective communities. Unfortunately, those communities could not survive the Black Codes, Jim Crow, and the unadulterated racism of the era. In the 2000s, biases are still fervent, as are adversarial commercial interest. The difference is that Black Americans are no longer a nominal group, with little ability to push back. Instead, Black Americans have the power to deploy their greatest asset: the almighty dollar.

The Black dollar, to be specific. Though under-appreciated for its value and overlooked for its impact, the Black dollar is the single greatest weapon in the arsenal for social justice and racial equality. According to the Selig Center for

Economic Growth, Black buying power was \$1.4 trillion in 2019—that's higher than the gross domestic product of Mexico—and is projected to grow to \$1.8 trillion by 2024. With money of this magnitude comes the ability to effect change.

For example, when racial unrest roiled America in the summer of 2020 following the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and numerous other Black Americans, Corporate America took notice. Walmart pledged \$100 million and Bank of America pledged \$1 billion to combat racial inequity. Nike aired an ad telling viewers: "For Once, Don't Do It....Don't pretend there's not a problem in America." And retailers, from Victoria's Secret to Banana Republic, declared their support to eradicate racism. While not challenging the moral immensity of these companies' commitment to combat racial inequality, they surely understood the importance of placating a large block of people with significant ability to affect their bottom line.

Black activism is not an invention of the 21st century. In the Civil Rights Era, the Montgomery bus boycotts, the March on Washington, and other acts of civil disobedience, including non-violent protests to desegregate restaurants by Kansas City's Community Committee for Social Action, paved the way for equality *under the law*, even while individual prejudices still existed. What is relatively new is Black economic activism as a means to effect social and political change.

However, this newfound capital must be proactive and not simply reactive to the “upheaval of the day.”

Since the 2020 Presidential election, eighteen states have enacted new laws making it harder to vote, with Georgia and Florida passing laws that amount to wholesale disenfranchisement of minorities. In Georgia, despite massive protest—Major League Baseball pulling its All-Star game from Atlanta, and harsh criticism from local companies such as Delta Airlines and Coca-Cola—the law still passed. Would a boycott of the state’s film or tourism industry have stopped this draconian law from passing? Maybe not. And, considering the potential impact on jobs, campaigns of this sort should not be taken lightly. However, it might be a deterrent to other state governments. If lawmakers knew that their states’ budget would be diminished and their political fortunes might be affected, they might think twice before signing similar bills into law. Indeed, in 2017, North Carolina passed the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act, commonly known as House Bill 2, which blocked localities from passing protections for the LGBTQ community. Multiple states, cities, and businesses expressed overwhelming criticism of the law and threatened to withhold their business. In all, according to the Associated Press, the state lost more than \$3.76 billion. HB2 was ultimately repealed.

Critically, the Black dollar is not solely a tool to leverage large conglomerates and government entities to effect change; it is



Black buying power was \$1.4 trillion in 2019—that’s higher than the gross domestic product of Mexico—and is projected to grow to \$1.8 trillion by 2024.

—Selig Center for Economic Growth

also the foundation to build wealth in Black communities. When people invest in Black businesses, not only does the individual business succeed, but so does the collective. The Selig Center for Economic Growth indicates that the recent trend in Black buying power is partly the result of a surge in Black-owned businesses. In recent years, social media demonstrations were established to support these businesses, such as: #BuyBlack, #BankBlack and #BlackOutDay. These campaigns to encourage economic solidarity and close the wealth gap should not be limited to national campaigns. Rather, these Black-owned businesses must be supported and *consistently* uplifted by community members at the local level.

For example, in Kansas City, Missouri, Black-owned businesses such as Gates and LC's Bar-B-Q are nationally renowned restaurants that have flourished for years. Unfortunately, newer businesses looking to gain a foothold have had varying degrees of success. Local initiatives such as the "Give Black" campaign, KC Black Restaurant Week, and KC Black Owned help raise awareness of these businesses. Yet, in order for Black-owned businesses to have long-term success, it is essential that people make a conscious decision to patronize these businesses. To put it another way, we must invest in ourselves.

For certain, Black buying power and entrepreneurship is the primary vehicle for economic influence in America, but the Black dollar effect must also be predicated upon local investment in the community. Historically, other ethnic groups with greater organization and/or strategic advantages

have pooled their resources for investments in their local neighborhoods. Black Americans must be no different. Locally, Kansas City has seen renewed Black investment in the Historic 18th and Vine District, as well as neighborhoods along the Prospect and Northeast corridors. These efforts must not be diminished, delayed, or diluted. With thriving Black communities comes greater influence over decisions that directly affect Black Americans; e.g., police reforms, affordable housing, and community incentives.

Black Capitalism is real. If properly utilized, it can have an immeasurable effect on our social and political norms, as well as setting the building blocks for generational wealth. But complacency and lack of action will kill any movement. James Baldwin said, "There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now."

"There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now."

—James Baldwin



IS EQUITY ENOUGH TO BRIDGE KANSAS CITY'S DIGITAL DIVIDE?

CARRIE COOGAN

RICK USHER

KATIE BOODY ADORNO

What is equity, and what are the impacts of a lack of equity across all quality-of-life indicators, including economics, health, education, social justice and civic engagement? Is equity alone enough?

The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) defines “digital equity” as a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. NDIA goes on to state that digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services. The digital divide is commonly known as the measure of the lack of digital equity in a community.

“Digital inclusion” refers to initiatives seeking to bring about digital equity, ensuring that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to information and communication technology (ICT). That includes: 1) affordable, robust broadband internet service; 2) internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of users; 3) digital literacy training; 4) quality technical support; and 5) applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration.

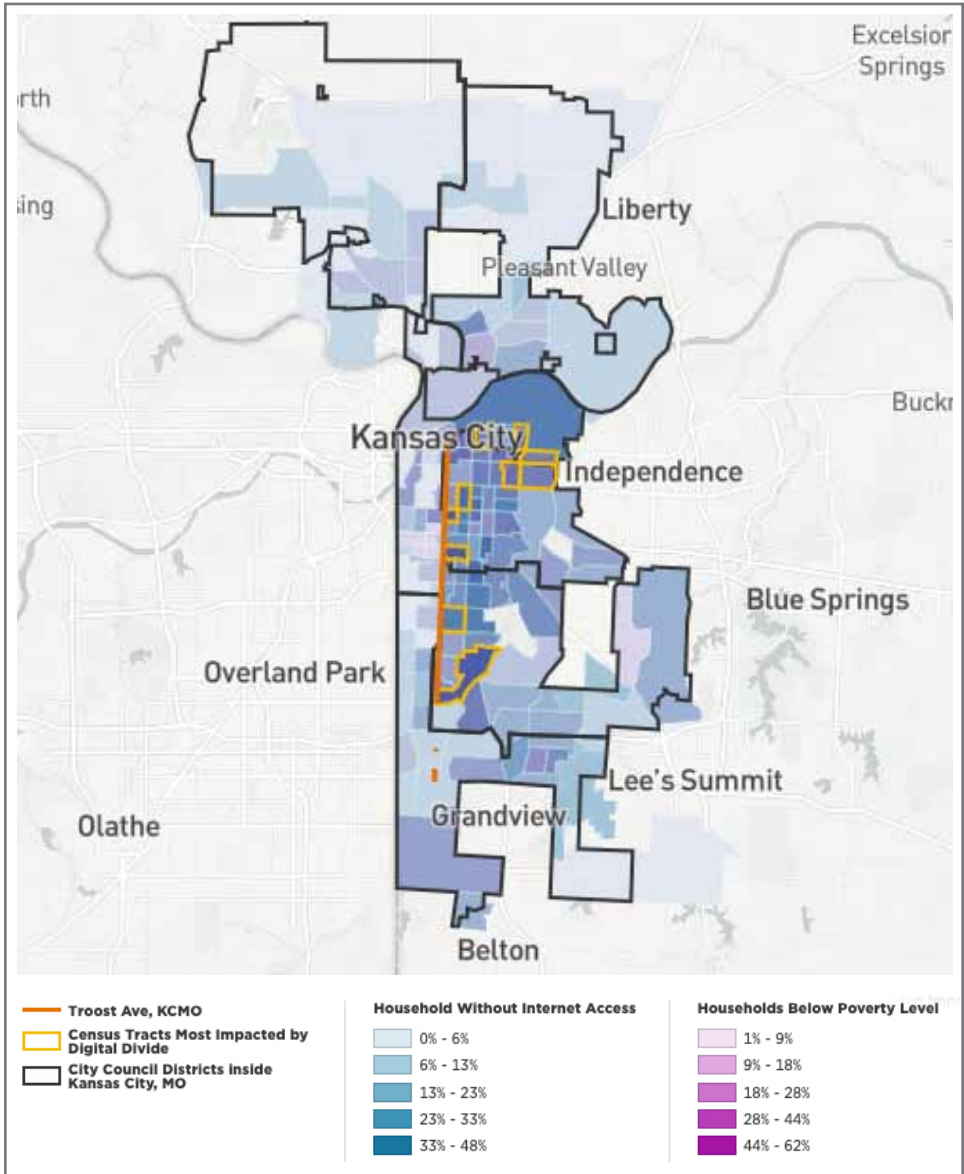
Digital inclusion must evolve as technology advances in order to maintain equity. These initiatives require intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use of technology.

The Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion is an open, collaborative group of Kansas City area nonprofits, individuals, government entities, and businesses focused on fostering internet access and digital readiness in

Greater Kansas City. Membership meetings occur monthly at the Kansas City Public Library. The Coalition’s mission is to ensure that every citizen and household in the metropolitan area has access to the internet, the equipment needed to use it, and the skills needed to take advantage of it. By facilitating collaboration among organizations

and initiatives working to bridge the digital divide, the Coalition looks to maximize resources for the greatest impact.

So, where are we in achieving digital equity in Kansas City, Missouri? We know that citywide, 14% of households do not have a home internet connection and 10% of households do not have a computer.



However, in the city's 3rd and 5th City Council Districts—neighborhoods most impacted by systemic racism, poverty, and economic disparity—26% and 21% of households lack a home internet connection and 21% and 15% of households lack a computer, respectively.

In Kansas City, the digital divide is primarily caused by the inability of low-income households to subscribe to affordable internet services. There are multiple internet service providers (ISPs) that offer speeds exceeding the FCC's definition of broadband (download rate of 25 mbps and upload rate of 3 mbps). In fact, Kansas City has some of the fastest internet speeds in the nation, with several Internet Service Providers offering speeds of 1,000 mbps across the Kansas City metro.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close their doors and transition to remote instruction, LEANLAB Education, a Kansas City-based nonprofit focused on public school innovation, surveyed 22 school districts in the KC metro area to assess the extent of the digital divide among public school students. It found that 12,757 students, or more than a fifth of the surveyed students, did not have home internet access. More than 2,500 were in need of laptops or tablets to complete their school work via virtual instruction.

LEANLAB, in collaboration with MySidewalk, found that the digital divide among public school students in Jackson County mirrored all-too-familiar segregation patterns.

Neighborhoods east of the historical racial dividing line of Troost Avenue had the highest density of households without reliable internet and devices necessary to fully participate in distance learning. However, in a remarkable collaborative response, philanthropists and federal programs committed millions of dollars in resources to address the issue. A year after the pandemic's onset, the number of students lacking internet access had shrunk by 98% (to 155), and the number needing devices had decreased by 80% (to 480).

While these are substantial, hard-won gains, it's important to note that most students were connected through low-bandwidth hotspots with limited data plans and devices owned and managed by school districts, and these districts rely on government and philanthropic funding. It brings up larger questions: What will it take to connect all households to internet services fast enough to accommodate 21st-century, post-pandemic life (with multiple devices, Zoom calls, video streaming, distance learning, remote work, telehealth, etc.)? And who is responsible for meeting those needs?

Local responses are essential. But so is a national solution. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fact that the internet is a necessity—as much a core utility as power and running water—in navigating today's society. Equal and affordable access should be a priority. From city to state to nation, we should move accordingly.

PHILANTHROPY MUST CHANGE TO ACHIEVE TRANSFORMATIVE OUTCOMES IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

DENISE ST. OMER, J.D.

“Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 1963 before the March on Washington, Martin Luther King, Jr. released the book *Strength to Love*, a collection of sermons reflecting Dr. King’s belief that we are “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality.” Included in that collection was Dr. King’s call for philanthropy to look beyond charity and address the underlying conditions that perpetuate the need for that charity.

Today, as the region grapples with COVID-19’s disproportionate public health and economic impact on our Black and Latinx communities and ongoing calls for racial justice, Dr. King’s words take on a new sense of urgency. While we have seen a movement in the philanthropic sector to address the systemic and institutional barriers driving the racial disparities highlighted in the Urban League of

Greater Kansas City’s Equality Index, what is missing from those conversations is an understanding of how those systemic barriers exist within the sector itself. As aptly stated in a report released by The Bridgespan Group and ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities, “Philanthropy is a system that needs to be transformed to be more responsive and accountable to communities most directly impacted by injustice.”¹

In the Black community, there is an often-used phrase that reflects the type of transformational change needed within the philanthropic sector: “nothing about us, without us.” Additional research has identified two of the biggest factors holding back efforts within the sector to advance social change: a lack of understanding of the role of race in the problem philanthropists are trying to solve and the significance of race when it comes to how philanthropists identify leaders and find solutions.²

Organizations led by leaders of color face significant barriers to accessing funding. The Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity reports that in 2016, only 10% of the \$24.2 billion granted domestically by a sample of 1,000 of the largest U.S. foundations was targeted to people of color.³ Four years later, those disparities continue to persist. In 2020, researchers found that the revenues of Black-led organizations are on average 24% smaller than the revenues of their White-led counterparts and have unrestricted assets that are 76% smaller than their White-led counterparts.⁴ The

Bridgespan Group has identified four key barriers to capital faced by leaders of color:

1. Getting connected to potential funders: Leaders of color have inequitable access to social networks that enable connections to the philanthropic community.
2. Building a rapport with potential funders: Interpersonal bias can manifest as mistrust and microaggressions, which inhibit relationships and emotionally burden leaders of color.
3. Securing support for the organization: Funders often lack understanding of culturally relevant approaches, leading them to over-rely on specific forms of evaluation and strategies with which they are familiar.
4. Sustaining relationships with current funders: Grant renewal processes can be arduous if mistrust remains, and funding may stop if the funder has a White-centric view of what is a strategic priority and how to measure progress.⁵

So how can philanthropy transform to reflect commitments to dismantling systemic barriers and achieving the impact they seek for our Black and Latinx communities?

Start with bold leadership. Foundations and nonprofits should make racial equity a top priority within their own institutions and create the cultural change needed to advance leadership for people of color. They should create systems of support for aspiring leaders of color where they have a space to address racialized barriers to advancement.

Engage our boards and staff in deep, ongoing learning on racial equity. After the murder of George Floyd and the racial unrest that followed, many foundations moved quickly to respond in the moment. But moving the needle on persistent racial disparities requires a long-term commitment and a deep understanding of systemic racism. These are often uncomfortable conversations for a society in which color blindness has long been the goal. We must strive to be color brave, not colorblind.

Examine our own systems and processes and include decision making practices at all levels in this review. As we can see from this report, the systems and processes philanthropy has used to try to improve conditions in our Black and Latinx communities have not had the desired impact, and racial disparities persist. Many of those processes have the unintended consequence of disadvantaging organizations led by people of color, specifically small, grassroots organizations and those organizations advancing policy and advocacy agendas necessary for social change.

Apply an intentional racial equity lens. Too often diversity and racial equity are used interchangeably, and while they are both critical, there are important differences. Efforts to support White-led organizations in diversifying their staff and boards are incredibly important and must be supported and sustained. But we must also layer on a racial equity lens to how we work with and in communities of color. ABFE has identified

the following building blocks for racially equitable work:

- Community organizing and constituency engagement builds the power of and invests in the people most impacted by the issue.
- Shared language and understanding of structural racism.
- Local racial history and structural analysis that identifies accumulated causes of disparate outcomes and devises strategies accordingly.
- Systemic application of a racial equity impact analysis for key initiatives, decisions, policies, and practices.
- Effective communication about the benefits to all from racially equitable work, and fair media coverage.
- Disaggregated data to determine the “what, why, where” of racial disparities and how to address them.

Foundations and nonprofits should make racial equity a top priority within their own institutions and create the cultural change needed to advance leadership for people of color.

We will never program our way out of racial disparities. For example, take our traditional approach to moving families out of poverty: We look for programs to teach people how to better manage their finances. Those programs are critically important, but if a family doesn't have any money to manage, they will continue to live in poverty. So while we provide funding for financial literacy programs, we must also identify the systemic barriers families face and provide funding to dismantle them. For philanthropy to achieve the transformational changes we seek, we must transform.

- 1 Batten, S., Jones, E., MacKrell, L. & Petit-Frere, J. (2020). *Guiding a Giving Response to Anti-Black Injustice*. <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/guiding-a-giving-response-to-anti-black-injustice>
- 2 Dorsey, C., Bradach, J. & Kim, P. (2020). *Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table*. <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/disparities-nonprofit-funding-for-leaders-of-color>
- 3 Villarosa, L. What does philanthropy need to ask to deepen investments for racial and gender justice. *Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity*. <https://racialequity.org/philanthropy-needs-to-deepen-investments-for-racial-and-gender-justice/>
- 4 Dorsey, C., Bradach, J. & Kim, P. (2020). *Racial Equity and Philanthropy: Disparities in Funding for Leaders of Color Leave Impact on the Table*. <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/disparities-nonprofit-funding-for-leaders-of-color>
- 5 Ibid.



A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

GERALDLYN “GERI” SANDERS

If you walked around the 18th and Vine Historic District in the 1920s, everyone you saw looked like you, if you were African American. The youth of that time should have been inspired by the Black-owned businesses and opportunities for entrepreneurship, as well as the leadership of schools, churches, and health organizations.

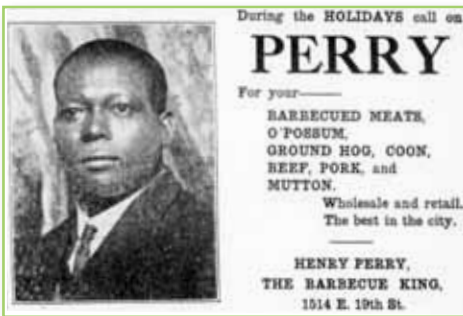
Jim Crow was the reason for the separation of the races. Segregation also promoted an autonomous community in some ways better than the dominant society. Those days are gone; the borders of the Black community have spread because

of integration, but unfortunately, some communities remain the same. JC Nichols, the Kansas City real estate developer, helped establish geographical limits that created inequality in housing, education, healthcare, and financial wellness. Now in the 21st century, African Americans are playing catch-up because of restrictions of the past.

The Black population in Kansas City rose between 1900 and 1940, primarily due to the Great Migrations from Southern rural communities. Jobs in the stockyards pulled many to Kansas City. At the end of WWI, the historic district became a commercial center for Black businesses, most of which were constructed during this period. The war also created a more assertive and outspoken generation exhibiting a newfound racial

pride, many of whom refused to submit to racial practices in place at the time. This generation has been labeled the “New Negro.”

Baseball, barbecue, and bebop have become synonymous with Kansas City. One of the most important institutions was the Paseo Branch YMCA, which was organized by local Black businessmen who raised money for the building to match funds from famed Chicago philanthropist, Julius Rosenwald. In 1920, the Negro Leagues were formed when several Black baseball club owners met at the “Y.”



In 1907, “The Barbecue King,” Henry Perry, moved to Kansas City, where he began cooking in the Garment District selling smoked meats wrapped in newspapers. The barbecued meats that Perry sold included beef, poultry, pork, and wild game. To complement his meats, Perry developed a spicy, peppery sauce. With the business doing well, Perry moved his stand to 17th and Lydia, eventually opening a restaurant at 19th and Highland. This restaurant, an old trolley barn, remained at this location during most of the 1920s and 1930s.

Perry was described as one of the “biggest businesses of any Negro in Greater Kansas

City” by the *Kansas City Sun* (December 9, 1916). Perry’s influence continued to extend into the community, prompting George Gates, founder of Gates and Sons Bar-B-Q, and Charlie and Arthur Bryant, founders of Arthur Bryant’s Barbeque, to follow in his footsteps.

The businesses at 18th and Vine, as well as the entertainment district along 12th Street, created a new jazz sound, and the area became known as a “Mecca” for the New Negro. Although the 18th and Vine historic district was primarily known for its commercial value, entertainment centers such as nightclubs and dance halls flourished. The Eblon Theater, Subway Club, El Capitan Club, Sunset Club, the Blue Room, and several other businesses helped this area become a prominent center for jazz in the 1920s that was different from New Orleans and Chicago.

The influence of Tom Pendergast, boss of the Democratic machine in Kansas City, and Prohibition helped develop the “Kay Cee” style of jazz. Pendergast’s “wide open” city managed to keep nightclubs open even during Prohibition. This allowed musicians the opportunity to work, and the presence of so many musicians meant more opportunities to polish their craft in legendary cutting sessions. Count Basie was at the forefront of the jazz scene. A famous pianist and composer, William Basie arrived in Kansas City in 1924, becoming involved in the movement as the leader of his own big band by the 1930s. In December 1938, the Count Basie Orchestra

played at Carnegie Hall in what has been termed the “first real jazz concert.”¹

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was equality in all aspects of life in Kansas City, where the lessons of the past could manifest today as they did in the early development of the historic district. We certainly have many examples to choose from, such as Fannie Meek, Charles W. Williams, and Homer B. Roberts.

Mrs. Meek opened a mortuary business in the 1930s as the only “licensed lady embalmer in Kansas City.” She was a trailblazer and one of the few women of her time to go into the mortuary business. Her motto was, “serves honestly and serves well regardless of financial circumstances.” Mrs. Meek's Mortuary branded herself by using pink as the color for her limousines and building façade at 1707 E. 18th Street.

The Williams Photo Studio, located at 1808 Vine Street, opened in the mid-1920s and remained in business at that location until 1959. The owner, Charles W. Williams, was born in Texas in 1893 and moved to the Kansas City area around 1910. The Williams Photo Studio Collection² contains images including African-American hospitals, schools, social clubs, and residences in Kansas City.

Homer B. Roberts wore many hats and received many accolades, but the most important was the designation as owner of

the first Black car dealership in the United States. Not allowed to sell cars to White patrons, he established his dealership at 18th and Vine and later built the Roberts Motor Mart at 19th and Vine for \$76,000 in 1926. This building was unique, in that it was named the “Negro Shopping Center” and housed businesses such as a car showroom, a cleaners, and a luncheon counter, as well as a beauty salon.

Today the historic district has changed, the number of businesses has dwindled; buildings stand in disarray or have been razed. When did this neighborhood change? What would cause such a collapse of an entire community? Why would things be different from 1920 to 2020? There are many contributing factors that caused the community to change, such as integration, urban renewal, and unequal real estate practices.

Walk north from the corner of 18th and Vine to 1836 Tracy, the former location of the R.T. Coles Vocational and Junior High School, and what you see will look like a deserted industrial zone. Some efforts are being made to preserve the historic district and bring businesses back into the area, but the memories, lessons, and stories of the past are being lost with each passing day. We must try harder to preserve this heritage; otherwise we will not be able to move into the future because of our lack of knowledge of the past.

1 Young, William H. and Nathan B. Young, Jr., *Your Kansas City & Mine*, Midwest Afro-American Genealogy Coalition, 1997.

2 Williams Photo Studio Collection, currently housed at the Black Archives of Mid-America.



In February 2021, the Urban League of Greater Kansas City and KCATA unveiled a Racial Equity and Social Justice Bus to Commemorate Black History and the Urban League's 100-Year Legacy.

RIDEKC – ZEROFARE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

QUALITY-OF-LIFE SURVEY 2021

DEVELOPED FOR THE
URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

LINWOOD TAUHEED, PH.D.
PANAYIOTIS MANALAKOS, PH.D.

ASSISTED BY
ROBERT JOHNSON, IPHD STUDENT
UMKC DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July and August of 2021, the UMKC Center for Economic Information (CEI) conducted survey research and analysis for the Urban League of Kansas City (ULKC) to contribute to the publication of an analysis of the effects on quality-of-life of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority's (KCATA/RideKC) ZeroFare program.

To conduct the survey research, UMKC Associate Professor of Economics and Principal Investigator Dr. Linwood Tauheed developed a questionnaire designed to solicit information about changes in quality-of-life arising from the ZeroFare program. Questionnaire development was guided theoretically with reference to two frameworks: psychologist Abraham Maslow's well-known Hierarchy of Needs framework and a more modern Individual Quality-of-Life (IQOL) framework.

Based on both frameworks, 12 quality-of-life questions were formulated (two were combined demographic and quality-of-life questions). Four additional demographic questions were also asked (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, income level, and age [year born]).

The ten quality-of-life questions (Q3 through Q12) were developed in reference to the above two frameworks (Maslow and IQOL). (The questions are numbered from Q3 to Q12 to make adjustments for the two prior demographic questions). Those questions are:

- Q3** The ability to ride the bus free has allowed me to shop for food or other essentials more often.
- Q4** The ability to ride the bus free has increased my use of the bus.
- Q5** The ability to ride the bus free has helped me to get or keep employment.
- Q6** The ability to ride the bus free has increased my sense of safety on the bus.
- Q7** The ability to ride the bus free has allowed me to see my doctor or other healthcare provider easier or more often.
- Q8** The ability to ride the bus free has allowed me to visit friends and loved ones easier or more often.
- Q9** The ability to ride the bus free has made me feel that Kansas City leaders are concerned about my needs.
- Q10** The ability to ride the bus free has allowed me to engage in job training or education.
- Q11** The ability to ride the bus free has enabled me to travel to places I could not before.
- Q12** The ability to ride the bus free has helped my ability to pursue my personal goals.

The questions were all prefixed with the leading phrase “The ability to ride the bus free has...” in order to focus the respondent’s attention on changes caused by implementation of ZeroFare. The trailing question phrases were also constructed to elicit answers around change by the use of words and sub-phrases such as: “more often,” “increased,” “helped,” “enabled,” “allowed,” and “could not before.”

Purposive sampling was utilized to select riders to whom the questionnaire was administered. Purposive sampling is where researchers use their own judgment when selecting members of the population to include in the sample. Generally, we concentrated on high-ridership transit stops and routes, although other transit stops and routes were surveyed in order to expand the variation in the surveyed population. Very few riders refused to complete the survey instrument; in fact, most seemed eager to participate. A small gift was given to riders who completed the questionnaire. The survey team collected a total of 1,686 surveys. A considerable proportion of respondents were quite satisfied with the ZeroFare program, and they moreover reported (in our interpretation of their survey answers) that it has led to a considerable improvement in their quality-of-life.

KEY DEMOGRAPHIC HIGHLIGHTS

Key demographic highlights (race/ethnicity, gender, income level, and age [year born], working car, and valid license) of the respondents are shown in the following figures.

- As shown in Figure 1, Race/Ethnicity as a % of Total Respondents, except for the multi-racial category, the race/ethnicity categories are a selection by respondents who identified themselves in a single category only. More than half of respondents, 51%, identified as Black/African-American only. White only respondents were 27% of total respondents. The next largest race/ethnicity group were Hispanics only, who were 6.11% of total respondents. Those who identified as more than one category (multi-racial) were 5.40% of total respondents.
- As shown in Figure 2, Gender as a % of Total Respondents, 66% of respondents were male, and 32% of respondents were female.
- As shown in Figure 3, Income Level as a % of Total Respondents, more than 50%

FIGURE 1: Race/Ethnicity as a % of Total Respondents

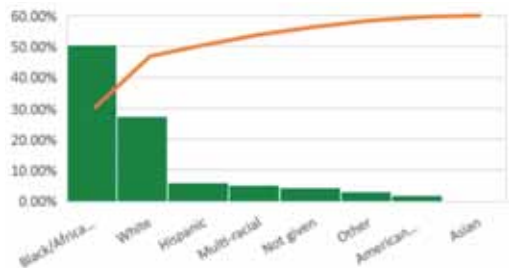


FIGURE 2: Gender as a % of Total Respondents

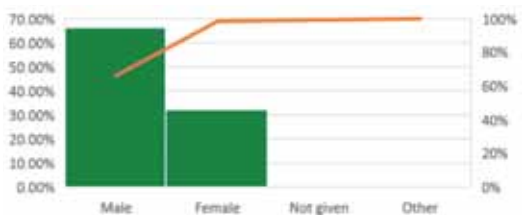


FIGURE 3: *Income Level as a % of Total Respondents*

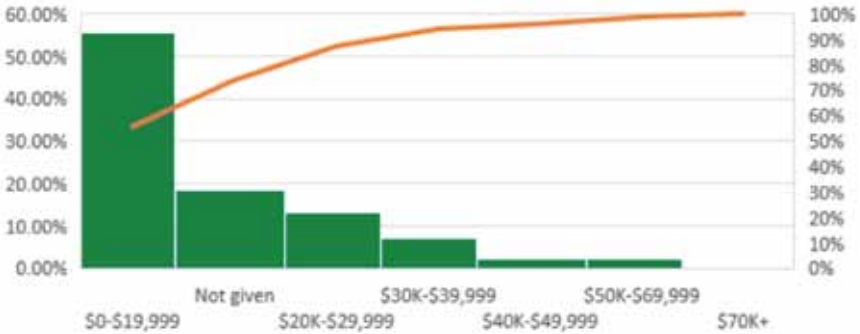
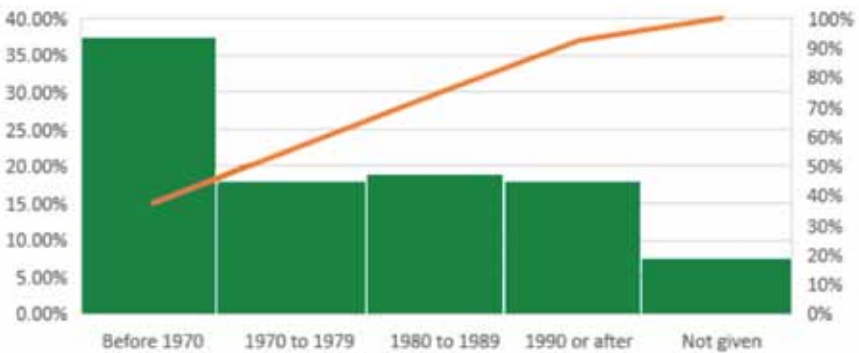


FIGURE 4: *Year Born as a % of Total Respondents*



of respondents, 56%, were within income level \$0-\$19,999. The drop-off to the next income level (excluding Not given), which is \$20,000-\$29,999, was reported by 13% of respondents. Not given was the response of 18% of respondents.

- As shown in Figure 4, Year Born as a % of Total Respondents, 37% of respondents were born Before 1970. The next two categories, from 1970–1979 to 1990 or after, were both between 18% and 18.9%.
- As shown in Figure 5-Q1: Do you have a working car or other vehicle you could have used for this trip instead of taking the bus today?, the vast majority of respondents, 86%, reported not having a

working car or other vehicle they could have used.

- As shown in Figure 6-Q2, Do you have a valid driver's license?, 62% of respondents reported not having a valid driver's license.

As can readily be seen from this demographic summary,

- The surveyed riders were overwhelmingly working class with a majority having an (individual) yearly income of less than \$20,000.
- The vast majority of riders do not have a working car, and the majority do not have a valid driver's license, which, in our

FIGURE 5: Working Car as a % of Total Respondents

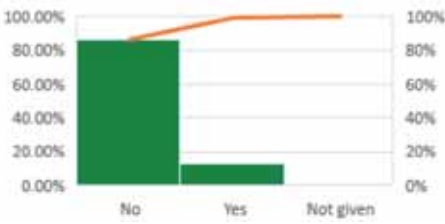
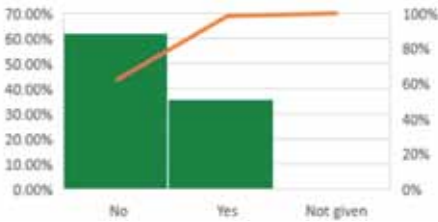


FIGURE 6-Q2: Valid Driver's License as a % of Total Respondents



view, highlights the importance of public transportation for Kansas City's working-class community.

KEY QUALITY-OF-LIFE HIGHLIGHTS

As can be seen in Table 1, all questions received exceptionally high combined agreement (Strongly Agree + Agree) responses ranging from 79.24% for the lowest, to 91.99% for the highest.

- Question Q3 about food shopping, at 91.99%, has the highest combined agreement. Question Q4 about bus usage, at 89.80%, has the second highest. That question Q3 has the highest combined agreement, we believe, validates both the importance to typical RideKC riders of being able to find opportunities for food shopping outside of urban food deserts, and also

the importance of ZeroFare in providing a mechanism for that opportunity. In the context of question Q3 and all other questions, we interpret Question Q4 not as a quality-of-life outcome from ZeroFare, but as an input into the process by which quality-of-life improvements are obtained. Thus, question Q4 should have a high combined agreement for increased usage if bus use contributes to quality-of-life improvements. In other words, improvement in quality-of-life measures that can be improved by ZeroFare are effectuated by increased bus usage.

- Questions Q7 and Q8, about access to healthcare and ability to visit friends, at 88.49% and 87.66% respectively, are in the top half of combined agreement percentages and reveal the importance of these capabilities for quality-of-life improvement. ZeroFare adds significantly to these capabilities.
- At the bottom end of the combined agreement percentages, Question Q5, about employment, at 81.97%, while still high, is one of the lowest combined agreement responses in the survey. Question Q10, also about employment and more specifically job training, at 79.24%, is the lowest response. We interpret these two “close in combined percentage responses” as being consistent with each other, and also informative about the usefulness of ZeroFare, **on its own**, to increase employment opportunities for the

typical RideKC rider. Thus, ZeroFare can increase opportunities for employment for persons who must use the bus for transportation (86% of riders surveyed did not have access to a car or other vehicle), but the ZeroFare program cannot increase available jobs or job training opportunities. However, the inverse is also true. Having increased job and job training opportunities without the ability to get to those opportunities will also result in missed opportunities.

From these summaries, it is clear that for the vast majority of respondents, ZeroFare has improved their quality-of-life. How much improvement has come as a result of ZeroFare is not possible to estimate accurately, since there is no pre-ZeroFare data to compare with this survey. However, it is quite remarkable that the responses are consistently high across all 10 quality-of-life questions (Q3 through Q12).

An interesting finding, from question Q9 at 86.24%, a middle-value, is that the vast majority of respondents indicated that ZeroFare improved their perception that Kansas City's leaders were concerned about their needs. That perception expresses a spread effect of ZeroFare outside of KCATA services proper.

TABLE 1: Questions Q3–Q12 Sorted by Strongly Agree + Agree

The ability to ride the bus free has...

Q3 – 91.99%

allowed me to shop for food or other essentials more often.

Q4 – 89.80%

increased my use of the bus.

Q7 – 88.49%

allowed me to see my doctor or other healthcare provider easier or more often.

Q12 – 88.43%

helped my ability to pursue my personal goals.

Q8 – 87.66%

allowed me to visit friends and loved ones easier or more often.

Q9 – 86.24%

made me feel that Kansas City leaders are concerned about my needs.

Q11 – 83.87%

enabled me to travel to places I could not before.

Q5 – 81.97%

helped me to get or keep employment.

Q5 – 79.60%

increased my sense of safety on the bus.

Q5 – 79.24%

allowed me to engage in job training or education.

ZEROFARE: A BRIDGE TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

ROBBIE MAKINEN

I met a woman on the bus the other day. Through casual conversation she learned that I was the CEO of RideKCATA. She could not thank me enough for making regional transit free to customers. She told me the money she used to spend on fares now enables her to pay for critical medicine and food. My new acquaintance shared with me some of her day-to-day struggles to make ends meet. Like her, 58% of RideKCATA customers are African American, and like her, 72% of RideKCATA customers do not have a car available to them.

During the pandemic, public transit emerged as a lifeline, ensuring essential workers kept the country moving. Despite the great loss and turmoil endured in 2020, public transportation remains that one thing that connects people to the opportunities that improve lives, change lives, and even save lives.

Unfortunately, most U.S. transit systems are deeply rooted in policies that have negatively impacted minority communities. Far too many transit agencies still talk about their customers as “dependent” or “choice.” It is often assumed that choice riders need, even deserve, better service, more comfortable amenities, etc., than lower-income, often minority riders.

As a leader in the public transit sector and CEO of a transit agency, it is up to me and others in similar positions to resist “doing things the same way,” because that approach has quite simply resulted in social inequities that are preventing our communities from thriving. Public transportation is inherently the great equalizer. Those in the transit world need to ask the hard questions and not be afraid to think bigger than getting people from point A to point B. If we are going to be serious about social equity, we must listen to all riders and all communities and involve them in decision making.

RideKCATA promises to never run away from the people who need us most. We will run toward them. We have identified Four Pillars of Access to help keep our eye on our mission: access to Jobs, Education, Healthcare and Housing, built on a foundation of Social Equity. By eliminating the barrier and burden of fare payment, Kansas City’s ZeroFare transit initiative is one way that RideKCATA is improving access to opportunities for people who need it most. Charging fares is essentially imposing a regressive tax. ZeroFare immediately puts that \$1.50 cash fare to work in household budgets and in the local economy.

RideKCATA is the first transit agency in a major U.S. metropolitan area to implement ZeroFare transit in the last two decades. We navigated toward ZeroFare over several years, first offering all veterans free rides, then high school students, then safety net providers. As KCATA launched its third bus rapid transit route (Prospect MAX) with

ZeroFare, support from the community and elected officials grew.

ZeroFare has been in place system-wide since March 2020. For those living paycheck to paycheck, even the \$50 they would have spent on a monthly bus pass will improve the quality of life in the Kansas City area. It has increased ridership, sped up boarding time, and improved operator safety by eliminating the source of 90% of driver-involved disturbances. In fact, between 2019 and 2020, on-board safety incidents declined 39%. Because of ZeroFare, ridership has recovered at a faster pace in KC than nationally. In April 2020, while most of the country's transit ridership was just 20% of 2019 levels, RideKCATA's ridership held at 58% of 2019 levels. By October 2020, national ridership was still just 40% of 2019 levels, while RideKCATA had rebounded to 80% of 2019 levels.

Two local studies have shown positive community benefits of a ZeroFare program. A 2019 study by the Center for Economic Information in the University of Missouri-Kansas City's Department of Economics states that the regional financial impact of ZeroFare will be between \$13 and \$17.9 million. The Mid-America Regional Council's (MARC) econometric forecast model estimates the annual economic impact of continuing suspended fares is likely to raise regional economic output by \$4.2 to \$13.8 million and personal income by \$1.3 to \$4.6 million. MARC's analysis indicates that ZeroFare is likely to increase ridership between 20% and 60%.

It is important to understand we don't have to choose between fast, efficient service and ZeroFare. By weaving public transit into the community fabric, we have built valuable partnerships that enable customers to enjoy both. For example, the city of Kansas City, Missouri has committed \$4.8 million per year to fund ZeroFare. In our first private sector ZeroFare partnership, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City has agreed to fund up to \$1 million toward this initiative.

Historically, transportation planning and infrastructure have created inequities that have put a heavy burden on the minority community. Decades of research show that access to affordable transportation—either an automobile or public transit—is an essential part of moving out of poverty. For many families, especially those without access to a car, public transportation is that critical link to employment, education, and childcare facilities, as well as other services.

At RideKCATA, we are not just talking the talk. We are walking the walk with programs like ZeroFare. We are taking the blinders off and looking beyond the numbers to see real people, like the hard-working woman I met on the bus. Our ZeroFare initiative is redirecting the fare right back into the local economy. RideKCATA is positioned to be a part of the solution by providing access to opportunities for all to live and move safely, accessibly, and affordably in our community.

The return on investment for empathy, compassion, and social equity far outweigh the return on investment for asphalt and concrete.



ENSURING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ON BEHALF OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

SECRETARY MARCIA L. FUDGE, J.D.

On May 31, 2021 our country marked the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre. We remember this day as one of the most painful moments in our nation's history. A day when a community was devastated by hate.

Formerly enslaved Black people put down roots in the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa in an area that became known as Black Wall Street. They built their own community—full of talent, culture, and hope. Until that dreadful night, when a mob of more than 1,000 White people descended upon Greenwood. Thousands of Black homes and businesses were destroyed. Yet, no arrests were ever made. No proper

accounting of the dead was ever performed. No justice was ever realized.

Following the massacre—as the people of Greenwood tried to put their lives back together—they were still confronted with the ever-present vestiges of systemic racism. Discriminatory practices such as redlining and racist zoning laws prevented Black Tulsans from getting the loans they needed to repair their homes and businesses. The community—like so many Black communities in America—was cut off from jobs and opportunity. Disinvestment from the state and federal government denied Black Wall Street a chance at truly rebuilding.

As we reflect on the Tulsa Race Massacre, we are reminded that even 100 years later, America continues to bear the scars of our dark legacy of racism. It is a constant struggle to address the damage systemic racism has inflicted on our people and this nation.

In June, I was proud to join President Biden in Tulsa, where he became the first sitting President to visit Greenwood and mark the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre. It was a moment in our history when our federal government recognized the role it has played in creating barriers for Black communities—and its commitment to break down those barriers.

Today, 100 years later, Black and brown households continue to face discrimination in the housing market—when trying to secure mortgages, to move our families into neighborhoods with greater opportunities, and when having our homes appraised.

A 2018 Brookings study found that homes in majority-Black neighborhoods are often valued at tens of thousands of dollars less than similar homes in majority-White communities. The impact of disparities in home appraisals can be far-reaching, limiting homeowners' ability to benefit from refinancing or to re-sell their homes at fair market value. It is a direct form of wealth stripping that contributes to the racial wealth gap.

To add salt in our wounds, we know families of color have borne the brunt of the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. People of color were more likely to lose their jobs, to experience a loss in wages, and to fall behind on their rent and mortgage payments.

Fortunately, I am glad to say that—under the Biden-Harris administration—it is a new day in America.

The President is determined to help families achieve greater security and build intergenerational wealth by making equitable access to housing a central priority.

During the President's first week in office, he charged our federal government to work with communities in eliminating racial bias and other forms of discrimination in all stages of home buying.

To build upon that commitment, President Biden has tasked me with leading an interagency initiative to combat inequity in home appraisals. It is the first such government-led initiative of its kind—and we have already started laying the groundwork.

As we reflect on the Tulsa Race Massacre, we are reminded that even 100 years later, America continues to bear the scars of our dark legacy of racism.

We will take swift, aggressive steps that tap into all of the levers at the federal government's disposal. These include potential enforcement actions under fair housing laws, regulatory actions, and the development of standards and guidance among industry and state and local governments. Together, we will help break down the barriers that keep Black and brown families across the nation from building greater wealth.

At HUD, we understand a secure and stable home represents more than four walls and a roof. Our homes connect us to good schools, better jobs, more affordable transportation options, and communities with cleaner air and water. Our homes are the bedrock upon which we build our futures. To put it simply, our homes are our foundations.

As America commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, we must rededicate ourselves to ensuring social and economic justice on behalf of communities of color. We must finally rid ourselves of the stain of systemic racism from the very fabric and soul of our nation.

That is the mission the Biden-Harris administration will work relentlessly to achieve.

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CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?



ECONOMICS
RECOMMENDATIONS

Charting the path to equity in economics is only achievable with radical economic reforms.

In *Why we need Reparations for Black Americans* (April 2020), Rashawn Ray and Andre Perry wrote:

Today, the average white family has roughly 10 times the amount of wealth as the average Black family. White college graduates have over seven times more wealth than Black college graduates. Making the American Dream an equitable reality demands the same U.S. government that denied wealth to Blacks restore that deferred wealth through reparations to their descendants in the form of individual cash payments in the amount that will close the Black-white racial wealth divide. Additionally, reparations should come in the form of wealth-building opportunities that address racial disparities in education, housing, and business ownership.¹

Regarding the descendants of the **12.5 million Blacks** who were shipped in chains from Western Africa, U.S. Representative Hakeem Jeffries said, “America has a genetic birth defect when it comes to the question of race.” If America is to atone for this defect, reparations for Black Americans is part of the healing and reconciliation process.

With April 4 marking 52 years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, we think it is appropriate to end with an oft-forgotten quote from Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream Speech” that he gave in 1963 in Washington, D.C. This statement is still one of the unfulfilled aspects of this policy-related speech:

“We have come to our nation’s capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir....It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked ‘insufficient funds.’ But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt.”²

Given the lingering legacy of slavery on the racial wealth gap, the monetary value we know that was placed on enslaved Blacks, the fact that other groups have received reparations, and the fact that Blacks were originally awarded reparations only to have them rescinded, there is overwhelming evidence that it is time to pay reparations to the descendants of enslaved Blacks.

Ray and Perry make a strong case for reparations as a remedy for the racial wealth gap and outlined the following recommendations with which the Urban League concurs:

1. **Individual payments for descendants of enslaved Black Americans.**
2. **College tuition to four-year or two-year colleges and universities for descendants of enslaved Black Americans.**
3. **Student loan forgiveness for descendants of enslaved Black Americans.**
4. **Down payment grants and housing revitalization grants for descendants of enslaved Black Americans.**
5. **Business grants for business start-ups, business expansion to hire more employees, or purchasing property for descendants of enslaved Black Americans.**

Additionally, the Urban League recommends:

6. **Fifty-year exemption of federal, state, and local taxes for descendants of enslaved Black Americans. This will provide two generations with the opportunity to gain taxed advantage savings and growth on investments.**
7. **Federal and state funding of Historically Black Colleges and Universities to recoup dollars lost due to Jim Crow funding formulas and recent funding inequities.**

To bridge the Digital Divide, we recommend:

1. **Local, state, and federal funding to community-based agencies to carry out canvassing, community outreach, and community assistance to support families with accessing and onboarding to the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program.**
2. **Facilitate public/private partnerships for digital equity in education, workforce development, remote work, healthcare, financial education, entrepreneurship, and participation in the digital economy.**
3. **Broadband internet access must be available and affordable to low-income households.**
4. **Support the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion as the regional consortium facilitating public engagement and awareness of the benefits of Internet access and bridging the digital divide.**

1 <https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/bigideas/why-we-need-reparations-for-black-americans/>

2 <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1963-martin-luther-king-jr-i-have-dream/>

CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY ENOUGH?

A SPECIAL COLLECTION OF
ARTICLES AND OP-EDS



EDUCATION

FOREWORD

THE GHOSTS OF SEGREGATION CONTINUE TO HAUNT KANSAS CITY'S EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

JANEL GEORGE, J.D.

Kansas City's education landscape continues to be haunted by the ghosts of segregation.¹ As a consequence of this history, the city's public schools are majority Black, and the state's disinvestment from Black communities has resulted in the persistent under-resourcing of these schools. Recent events have only exacerbated the pre-existing educational inequalities impacting the educational experiences and outcomes for Black students in Kansas City.

Like other school districts in the nation, Kansas City's public schools have been significantly impacted by the global pandemic—and they will continue to be impacted in 2021 and beyond. The Kansas City Department of Health and Environment reported 368,976 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 5,557 deaths since the onset of the outbreak.² This comprises a large proportion of the state's overall rate of 630,067 cases since the onset of the pandemic and the 10,610 reported deaths statewide.³ In Johnson County, Black people comprise about 5% of the population but 13% of those testing positive as of April 2021.⁴ Data also show Black Missourians are 1.9 times more likely to die from the virus than White Missourians and 1.4 times more likely than others in the entire state.⁵ Systemic racism embedded into law and policy dating from the era of slavery has heightened the probability of Black people being vulnerable to the virus. Racial inequality in education has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Some of the most persistent issues currently impacting the state of education for Black students in Kansas City are briefly summarized below.

THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

As schools transitioned to virtual learning during the pandemic, inadequate broadband infrastructure—known as the “Digital Divide”—particularly prevalent in communities of color, was exposed.⁶ The Digital Divide has become a bigger issue for Kansas City during the pandemic.⁷ According to a recent study supported by the National Urban League, 16.9 million children nationwide lack the high-speed home internet access necessary to support online learning, and one in three Black students do not have high-speed internet at home.⁸ According to the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., “Black students are more likely than all other racial groups to lack the resources needed for online instruction.”⁹ According to another study, in areas east of Troost, 32% of homes lack internet access, and 26% are without a computer.¹⁰ Further, wireless broadband access alone is often insufficient

for students to engage in online learning due to limited capacity, reliability, or speeds available through wireline services.¹¹

A 2020 survey by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) showed that one in five Missouri students (about 200,000 statewide) did not have access to broadband at home, mainly due to affordability issues.¹² According to the state's Director of Broadband Development at the Department of Economic Development, state officials are working to improve access for the estimated 147,000 unserved or underserved households (and about 23% of the state's students) without reliable internet access in the state.¹³ Even with support from non-profits in the form of grants, hotspot connections, and donations of devices, a more permanent solution is needed to close the digital divide. Groups like the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion are working to improve access. And more than an estimated \$824 million has been invested in broadband projects across the state from the USDA, the Federal Communications Commission, and other partners. More than \$22 million of federal CARES Act funding went to improving internet access. A seven-member interim committee has been convened to examine where the state stands in 2021 and to identify necessary steps that policymakers need to make to ensure ready access to broadband.¹⁴

COVID RECOVERY

As a result of the challenges deepened by the pandemic, talk of “learning loss” has emerged, and many Black parents are concerned that their children may be held behind or targeted for remediation. It is important to ensure that these concerns do not translate to punitive policies that stigmatize Black children. Particularly because “[r]esearch on the science of learning and development indicates that intensive remediation alone will not meet students’ needs and—if conducted in a way that is segregating, stigmatizing, and separated from children’s real-life concerns—could even deepen inequalities and exacerbate trauma.”¹⁵ Therefore, the challenges made worse by the pandemic demand thoughtful and supportive policies designed to strengthen educational opportunities for Black students, not further stigmatize, segregate, exclude, or label them.

Federal aid to states poses potential relief and support for schools to help students. In the largest federal investment ever in public education—just over \$170.3 billion—Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act in March 2021.¹⁶ According to calculations by the Learning Policy Institute, the state of Missouri received \$1,956,529,000 in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funding from the law.¹⁷ The funding can be used to support students experiencing homelessness (exacerbated by the lifting of the moratorium on evictions), summer enrichment programs, after-school programs, and other needed supports and services.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

In an attempt to divert people’s attention away from urgent issues like pandemic recovery and the loss of voting rights, conservative lawmakers have been introducing measures to prohibit the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT).¹⁸ CRT is a concept developed by legal scholars that is usually taught in higher education, but not in K–12 schools. Conservative policymakers have conflated CRT with anything related to race or the acknowledgement of racial inequality, such as Culturally Responsive Pedagogy or diversity and inclusion trainings and have sought to limit discussions of racial inequality in schools.¹⁹ These legislative measures build from the now-rescinded Executive Order 13950 issued by former President Trump in October 2020 portraying efforts to address racial inequality as casting some people as “oppressors” because of their race or sex.²⁰

The originators of CRT, including Kimberlé Crenshaw and the late Harvard Law professor Derrick Bell, sought to understand the endurance of racial inequality in a post-Civil Rights era. They recognized that the law could play a role in replicating racial inequality. And while it is not taught in K–12, it can provide a useful approach for examining how systems and structures—like the education system—can function to deepen racial inequality, as described in more detail in this report.

These issues impacting education for Black students in Kansas City were not created by the pandemic, but they have been exposed and—in many ways—deepened by it. With federal support and continued oversight and accountability from parents and local policymakers, it is possible to begin to address these long-standing issues and improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Black students in Kansas City.

1 *Missouri v. Jenkins*, 495 U.S. 33 (1990).

2 Kansas Department of Health and Environment. COVID-19 Cases in Kansas | KDHE COVID-19 (kdheks.gov)

3 *Ibid.*

4 Cortlynn Stark and Glenn E. Rice (April 12, 2020). Fifty Percent of People Testing Positive for Coronavirus in Kansas City Are Black, *The Kansas City Star*. <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article241887476.html>

5 Tessa Weinberg (January 13, 2021). Nearly a Quarter of Missourians Would ‘Definitely Not’ Get COVID-19 Vaccine, Poll Finds, *News Tribune*. (newstribune.com)

6 NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Position on School Reopening During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-LDF-Principles-for-School-Reopening.pdf>

7 Marlee Baldrige (September 23, 2020). With School Taking Place Online, Kansas City Families Are Still Struggling to Get Connected, *The Kansas City Beacon*. <https://thebeacon.media/stories/2020/09/23/with-school-online-some-kansas-city-families-are-still-struggling-to-get-connected/>

8 John B. Horrigan (July 20, 2020). *Students of Color Caught in the Homework Gap*. Alliance for Excellent Education, National Indian Education Association, National Urban League, UnidosUS. (drawing upon data from the 2018 American Community Survey). https://futureready.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HomeworkGap_FINAL7.20.2020.pdf

9 NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund Position on School Reopening During the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-LDF-Principles-for-School-Reopening.pdf>

- 10 Marlee Baldrige (September 23, 2020). With School Taking Place Online, Kansas City Families Are Still Struggling To Get Connected, *The Kansas City Beacon*. <https://thebeacon.media/stories/2020/09/23/with-school-online-some-kansas-city-families-are-still-struggling-to-get-connected/>
- 11 John B. Horrigan (July 20, 2020). *Students of Color Caught in the Homework Gap*, Alliance for Excellent Education, National Indian Education Association, National Urban League, UnidosUS. (drawing upon data from the 2018 American Community Survey). https://futureready.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/HomeworkGap_FINAL7.20.2020.pdf
- 12 Alisa Nelson (March 24, 2021). Missouri Representative Says Requiring Student Broadband Access Report Will Help to Close Digital Divide, Missouri.net. <https://www.missourinet.com/2021/03/24/missouri-representative-says-requiring-student-broadband-access-report-will-help-to-close-digital-divide/>
- 13 Cameron Gerber (June 10, 2021). Missouri Ranked No. 32 in Broadband Access; Millions Invested in Improvements, *The Missouri Times*. <https://themissouritimes.com/missouri-ranked-no-32-in-broadband-access-millions-invested-in-improvements/>
- 14 The Committee will focus on four primary areas: business applications, online education, precision agriculture, and telemedicine. Committee members include Reps. Louis Riggs, Bishop Davidson, Travis Fitzwater, Jay Mosley, Wes Rogers, Travis Smith, and Sara Walsh. The committee will meet monthly and is expected to report its findings in December 2021. Ibid.
- 15 Bang, et al. (May 5, 2021). *Summer Learning and Beyond: Opportunities for Creating Equity*, Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/summer-learning-creating-equity-report>
- 16 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Pub. L. No 117-2. See also National Conference of State Legislatures.
- 17 Michael Griffith (March 11, 2021). *An Unparalleled Investment in U.S. Public Education: Analysis of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*, Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/covid-analysis-american-rescue-plan-act-2021#breakdown>
- 18 *Map: Where Critical Race Theory is Under Attack*. *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/map-where-critical-race-theory-is-under-attack/2021/06> (last updated August 26, 2021); U.S. Department of Labor. Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs. Revocation of Executive Order 13950. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ofccp/executive-order-13950>
- 19 “Last month, a letter drafted by Sen. Mike Moon (R-Ash Grove) and signed by other Republicans asked Gov. Mike Parson to issue an executive order banning the teaching of CRT and the ‘1619 Project’ in schools before students return in August.” Emily Manley (August 23, 2021). Fox2 Now. Lawmakers continue probe of critical race theory in Missouri schools despite results of district survey. <https://fox2now.com/news/missouri/lawmakers-continue-probe-of-critical-race-theory-in-missouri-schools-despite-results-of-district-survey/>
- 20 Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping, 85 Fed. Reg. 60683, (September 28, 2020) (rescinded and replaced by Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 86 Fed. Reg. 7009 [January 20, 2021]).

LEFT BEHIND: BLACK CHILDREN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE EDUCATION WELL

COKETHEA HILL, PH.D.



America, the land of liberty and democratic ideals, has deep, tenacious roots in defining opportunity and codifying injustice. One of the most salient areas in which the conflict between these twin legacies remains evident is in the American public education system. Once heralded as a “great equalizer” of all men, its tethering to the democratic ideals of America inextricably linked it to the underbelly of classism and racism. As the nation’s pendulum swings towards justice and equity, so too must our reimagining of America’s public education system.

From its genesis, the education system was created to serve the needs of the burgeoning society founded on philosophical truths, that all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these being life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Education soon became the vehicle by which assimilation to religious norms, values, traditions, and the skills required for full participation in democracy was transmitted

to others. Class, gender, and nationality became the early proxies for determining one’s access to education. In 1779, Thomas Jefferson proposed the “two track educational system”—one for the labored and one for the learned. The system’s goal was to separate the working class from the privileged. As the fight for civil rights ensued to expand those *inalienable rights* to those intentionally left behind, the educational system also evolved in its response to inclusion. Access, educational quality, and school resources were segregated based on an inherently biased belief system.

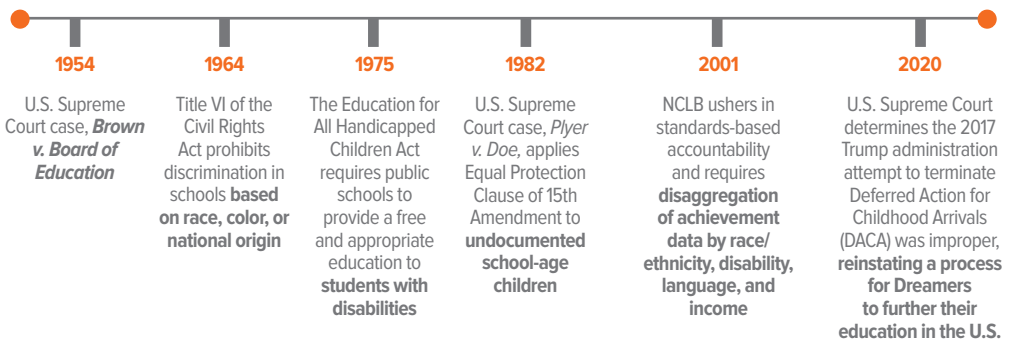
For example, in 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that racially segregated public facilities were legal, as long as the facilities for Blacks and Whites were “equal.” Equality was purely subjective, based solely on what White people believed Black people should receive. Blacks did not have “equal” standing with Whites in any facet of American life. This ruling codified Jim Crow laws, establishing the “separate

but (un)equal” doctrine, which segregated, marginalized, and oppressed human beings purely based on the color of their Black skin for the next six decades. The brute and oppressive force of slavery and Jim Crow was a clarion call to Black folks that education for Black children must be centered on racial uplift and justice for the future liberation of Black people in America.

Although we celebrate the perception of America being responsive to the demands of equal opportunity in education for Black children in the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, the culture within schools and the broader society was not aligned to those policy intentions. In our reteaching of history, we fail to mention how integration forced the closure of Black schools, eviscerated the Black community’s engagement and control over the education of their children, dismantled culturally relevant pedagogical practices that we have yet to regain, and forced Black children from caring and affirming school environments into punitive, isolated, and remedial classrooms taught by White teachers who had no desire to focus on their needs.

In an effort to protect White privilege within a forced integrated environment, a new wave of the old “two track system” emerged within schools, this time supported by policies, practices, and protocols to advantage White students and marginalize Black success. Vestiges of those early systems are still clinging for survival in our modern-day educational systems, as evidenced by the disproportionality in gifted and talented programs, zero-tolerance discipline policies in urban schools, over-representation of children of color in special education programs, disproportionality in suspensions that has led to the school-to-prison pipeline for young Black men, and the under-representation of Black teachers in classrooms. Each and every push to make educational systems more inclusive, equitable, and just occurred because everyday, ordinary people were determined to harness the collective power of their voices to demand systemic change. I’ve highlighted just a few of those shifts that redesigned education to meet the needs of a changing society.

We have indeed made great strides, and while policy sets the tone, direction, and



course for change, systems require people to implement, track, and evaluate alignment towards the intentions of policy. When policy is disconnected from the people it serves and the tools to evaluate efficacy through a transparent and engaging process, it most often produces disparities that remain unchecked and unyielding. Every system needs to assess the outcomes it produces against the vision it proclaims. This alignment check offers an opportunity for stakeholders of the system to examine the conditions producing the inequitable outcomes and chart a pathway for change. Change is not rendered in isolation of the people that are most proximate and impacted by the disparity. If we have learned anything from the *Brown* case, which did not engage Black or White communities, school teachers, administrators or families, it is that deep, meaningful impact will be thwarted if the people are not connected to the work. People are the engines that drive system change; policy sets the GPS towards the desired outcome.

SYSTEMS CHECK:

I have highlighted a few examples of how societal shifts forced education to change its course based on the needs of the people; however, I will also submit to you that those who have fought for access, inclusion, and equitable practices still find themselves not achieving parity in educational outcomes with the students the system was designed to serve (*White students, in case you skipped ahead*).

A review of academic performance data of students in our Greater Kansas City area

reveals that this trend holds true across school systems and delivery models. Many believe that poor educational outcomes are solely a function of poverty, neighborhood conditions, or parental/familial dynamics. While all of these indicators certainly exert a powerful force on education, race still remains a steadfast and unwavering predictor of outcomes even when income, parental education, and neighborhood conditions are controlled. A synopsis of our local educational data reveals striking similarities, Black students are at the bottom of each system's academic well, and no one has figured out how to rescue them at scale.

Annually, public schools are required to administer the Missouri Assessment Program exam (MAP) in March/April, as a way to measure the academic performance of students across schools and districts in subjects such as English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The MAP test is a grade level assessment that measures how students perform against the Missouri Learning standards. Scores on the MAP test allow for comparison of student performance across schools and school districts. Standardized tests are not a wholistic measure of teaching and learning, but provide a comparative snapshot of skill mastery. Findings presented in this article represent school- and district-level data provided to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the governing body of all schools and school districts in the State of Missouri. These data are reported directly from schools annually, and DESE makes these data publicly

available via their website. The data do not include academic performance of private or parochial religious-based schools. The MAP assessment is given to all students in Missouri public and charter schools in grades 3-8 in subjects such as English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. There are also end-of-course assessments for students in Algebra I, Biology, English II, and Government. For the purpose of this article, academic data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity and income across school systems. Missouri has four performance levels:

- Below Basic (student is multiple grade levels behind),
- Basic (student is a little behind),
- Proficient (student is on grade level), and
- Advanced (student is ahead of grade level)

All performance data in the following graphs represent the percentage of students who are proficient (on grade level) and advanced (above grade level). Graduation rate is presented as the percentage of students who graduate on-time, in four years of high school. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge there is substantial evidence-based research correlating standardized testing to racial inequities and bias. Many exams are not normed for children of color and often skew towards a middle-class world perspective. These assessments often lack creators, authors, or researchers of color in the design, proctoring, and evaluative process. I am not suggesting performance tests are a complete and wholistic representation of the full spectrum of teaching and learning nor a full or accurate measure of ability or intellect of any group of students. Performance assessments allow for a comparative analysis across schools and districts of how students are faring

TABLE 1: Student Population and Proficiency Rates by Locale (English Language Arts)

Locale	Total Students	White Students		Black Students		Latinx Students		Low-Income Students	
		Total Number	% Proficient	Total Number	% Proficient	Total Number	% Proficient	Total Number	% Proficient
Missouri	475,092	334,668	55%	74,356	25%	32,602	39%	244,262	35%
Jackson County	55,025	25,255	61%	16,563	27%	8,592	36%	32,646	32%
Blue Springs	7,554	5,372	71%	792	45%	621	60%	2,360	52%
Lee's Summit	9,611	7,157	67%	1,148	38%	425	48%	1,957	39%
KCPS	6,827	634	50%	3,688	18%	1,996	27%	6,827	25%
Charter	6,565	661	75%	3,611	30%	1,865	29%	5,569	30%
Hickman Mills	2,650	191	36%	1,936	19%	359	30%	2,650	23%
Grandview	2,084	360	50%	1,070	31%	5,01	38%	1,600	34%
Independence	7,216	3,957	50%	899	29%	1,587	39%	5,191	38%

against State standards. The questions posed to you as the reader are, what trends do you see evidenced in the data provided? And what, if anything, are you willing to do about it?

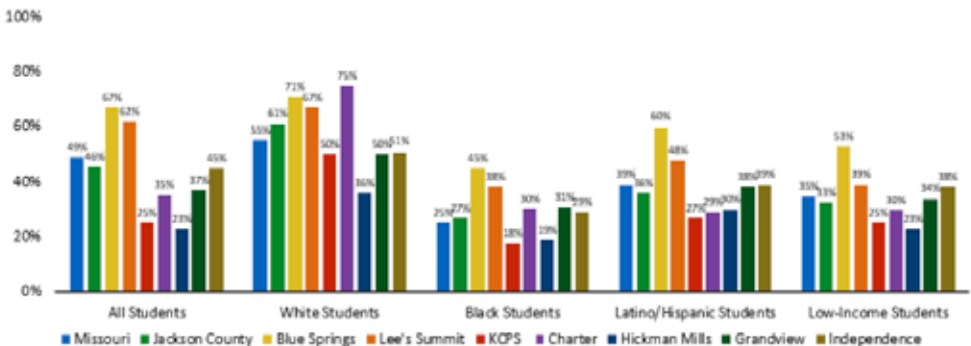
Table 1 outlines the respective Local Educational Agency (LEA), the total number of students that completed the MAP test in 2019. Proficiency rates are disaggregated by race and income status. This report is analyzing MAP data from 2019, the last full year of instruction pre-COVID. We anticipate that new academic performance data post-COVID will be released in early December 2021, and given students missed almost a year of in-person instruction, early hypotheses suggest that proficiency rates across students' demographics groups will drop lower than the 2019 pre-COVID scores.

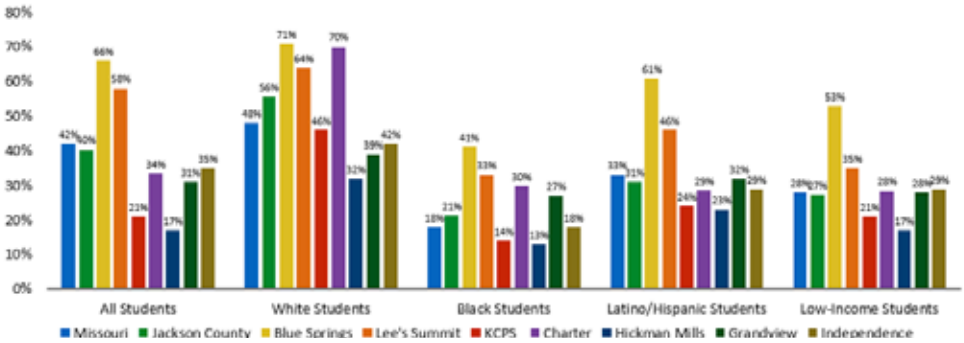
In the following four graphs, the vertical line (y axis) represents the percentage of proficiency. Proficiency for the purpose of this article is the percentage of students scoring on grade level or above based on MAP scores. The horizontal line (x axis) represents the demographic categories

of students who scored proficient or advanced. The bar colors represent the entity (locale, district) the proficiency rate was calculated for. Specifically, these graphs illustrate data calculated for the State of Missouri and Jackson County. Additionally, a subset of school districts that represent both suburban and urban traditional district schools as well as an aggregate of public charter schools within the boundaries of the Kansas City Public Schools will be reviewed.

Graph 1 represents the percentage of students who scored proficient (on grade level) or advanced in English language arts in 2019 on the MAP exam. Tracking the dark blue bar across demographics will give you an overall snapshot of the proficiency rate for the State of Missouri. We find that only 49% of all students in the State of Missouri who completed the MAP exam scored on grade level or above grade level. In essence, the majority of all students who completed the MAP exam did not score on grade level. Clearly, performance on the MAP does not align with the desires of parents, teachers,

GRAPH 1: *English Language Arts Performance*



GRAPH 2: Math Performance

administrators, and system leaders who are supporting students towards success in their educational journey. When we look at performance across demographics for the State of Missouri, we see stark disparities begin to emerge. Fifty-five percent of White students scored within the proficient and advanced range, compared to 25% of Black students, 39% of Latinx students, and 35% of students from low-income families. Students in low-income families comprised each demographic group. In summary, White students are twice as likely to score on grade level than Black students in English language arts on the 2019 MAP exam. The trends we see evidenced at the State level hold constant across the various school districts and subjects: the largest percentage of students scoring on grade level or above on the MAP exam are White students, and Black students have the lowest percentage of students scoring on grade level or advanced. Latinx and low-income students significantly lag behind White students but tend to have a slightly higher percentage of students scoring on grade level than their Black peers. Why

do you think these trends persist across suburban, urban, charter, and traditional district schools? Email your thoughts to chill@blaquekc.com.

Graph 2 represents the percentage of students who scored proficient (on grade level) or advanced in Math based on the 2019 MAP exam. If you look across the school systems represented in the graph, Blue Springs School District has the highest percentage of students scoring on grade level or advanced; however, Blue Springs, like every district represented, has staggering disparities in their proficiency data when you compare the performance of White students to students of color and students from low-income families.

Table 2 outlines the proficient and advanced percentages for the 2019 MAP science assessment for each LEA disaggregated by race and income. Science assessments are administered in grades 5 and 8.

Graph 3 represents the percentage of students who scored proficient (on grade level) or advanced on the 2019 MAP exam

TABLE 2: MAP Student Population and Proficiency Rates for Science

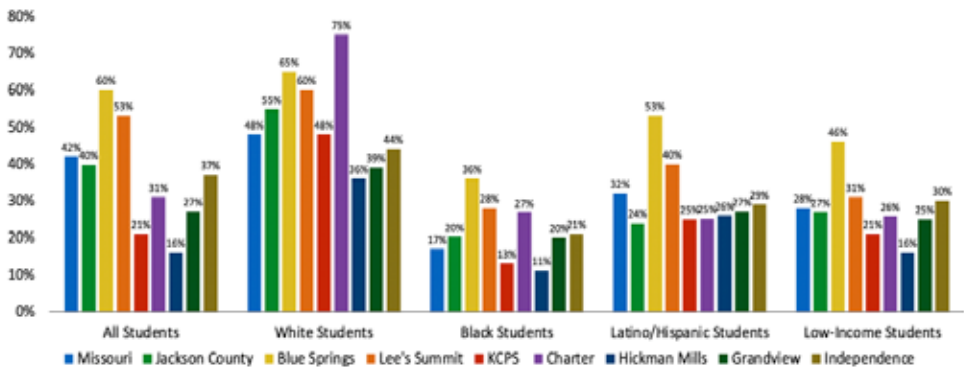
Locale	Total Students	White Students		Black Students		Latinx Students		Low-Income Students	
		Total Number	% Proficient	Total Number	% Proficient	Total Number	% Proficient	Total Number	% Proficient
Missouri	200,503	142,380	48%	3,0696	17%	13,675	32%	98,128	28%
Jackson County	22,811	10,801	54%	6,418	20%	3,484	30%	12,913	27%
Blue Springs	3,304	2,335	65%	348	32%	288	53%	972	46%
Lee's Summit	4,280	3,153	60%	548	28%	202	40%	827	31%
KCPS	2,518	202	48%	1,360	13%	740	25%	2,518	21%
Charter	2,619	196	75%	1,417	27%	692	25%	2,233	26%
Hickman Mills	937	70	36%	678	10%	139	26%	937	16%
Grandview	829	169	38%	392	20%	208	27%	631	25%
Independence	3,117	1,702	44%	363	21%	727	29%	2,221	30%

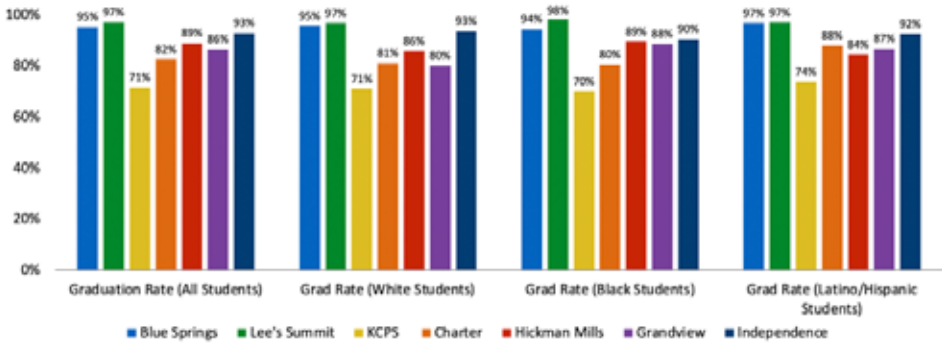
in science. Again, we see disparities in student proficiency rates across demographics, with White students and Black students often having the largest academic gaps evidenced across school systems. As a nation, to remain globally competitive, there must be an intentional focus on increasing pathways to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) careers. National and local efforts have focused on increasing awareness, access, and skills in STEM by providing students with internships that connect

learning in the classroom to real world experiences. For many of these students who are scoring below grade level in reading, math, and science, these career pathways will not be attainable. We all have a role to play to assist school leaders, teachers, elected officials, and families with improving academic mastery for students in Missouri, and there is much work to be done for all student groups.

Graph 4 presents graduation by race across school systems. Graduation

GRAPH 3: Science Proficiency Percentages



GRAPH 4: *Graduation Rate by School District*

rate is measured by the percentage of students who graduate from high school in four years. What can you surmise about graduation rates and a district's proximity to the urban core of Kansas City? Are there other trends you can draw comparisons to as they relate to socio-economic status, affordable housing, employment, or neighborhood conditions?

In summary, race is a significant influencer in the data represented. Each year based on scores from the MAP assessment, the State of Missouri lists schools that scored in the bottom 5% on the English language arts and math exams. When we isolate schools in the Greater Kansas City area, we find all of the schools ranked in the bottom 5% are at least 90% low-income, 90% Black in student population, or at least 90% minority students. In English language arts, math, and science across Jackson County, Black children have substantially lower odds of

being on grade level than any other group of students. In ELA, for example, a White student is 2.25 times more likely to be on grade level than a Black student.

In 2019, 776 students did not graduate on time (dropped out or in some cases will graduate in 5 or 6 years). Of those students, 363 were Black—47%—yet only 30% of the students in high school in 2019 were Black. Over 60% of all Black 12th graders are in eight high schools in Jackson County. The average graduation rate in these eight schools is 10 percentage points lower than the all-student average. We cannot hope for a more inclusive and prosperous Kansas City if we are not actively discussing and disrupting the racial disparities we see play out in our schools. The future of Kansas City's tomorrow is in our K–12 classrooms today. What will our investment be in the future of Kansas City?

WHO'S TEACHING OUR CHILDREN?

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

LATINX EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE AND URBAN EDUCATION RESEARCH CENTER

WHY DOES TEACHER DIVERSITY MATTER?

Teacher diversity is critical to the academic success of students and the learning opportunities available to them. A growing body of research demonstrates that teachers of color provide unique benefits to all students through the lived experiences they bring to the classroom and the explicit, implicit, and null curricular strategies they employ in their teaching. Each of these curricular strategies shapes the teaching and learning in which students participate in school (Einser, 1994; Milner, 2015).

- **Explicit curriculum** – Teaching aligned to objectives found in school, district, or state documents, policies, and guidelines (i.e., syllabi, state standards, etc.).
- **Implicit curriculum** – Teaching that is intended or unintended and is not stated or written down. Learning that occurs as a result of classroom discussions, current events (e.g., connecting lived experiences to events occurring locally and/or nationally; developing cultural awareness), inquiry and/or interests raised by students in classroom.

- **Null curriculum** – Opportunities students do not receive within the curriculum because the learning experience is simply not provided. Educational researcher Rich Milner (2015) describes it as, “what students do not experience in the curriculum becomes a message for them....if students are not taught to question, critique, or critically examine power structures, [they] are learning something” (p. 215). For example, when teachers teach the story of Thanksgiving through the lens of the conquerors, the null curriculum is the Thanksgiving story from the perspective of the indigenous people living in North America.

Teachers of color bring their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds into their teaching and approach to learning. As historically underrepresented and marginalized persons who are more likely to have experienced null curricula, teachers of color are more prone to make those learning opportunities (i.e., critical thinking, life skills, academic readiness) more explicit (McCutcheon, 2002). As a result, their race, ethnicity, and experiences within educational spaces and society at-large influences “why and how” they approach the curriculum and engage students in the learning process (McCutcheon, 2002; Milner, 2015).

Teachers of color are often more aware of the need to approach teaching through a culturally responsive lens, intentionally connecting students with the knowledge, intersections of identities, and experiences

they value and bring into the classroom (Brown, Brown & Rothrock, 2015). As a consequence, all students benefit from exposure to a variety of scholars (gender, race, ethnicity, ability), frameworks, and applications relevant to the curriculum. In addition, the ability and resiliency of students of color are better supported when there are teachers of color available to engage them (Andrews, Castro, Cho, Petchauer, Richmond, & Floden, 2019; Billingsley, Bettini & Williams, 2019; Carver-Thomas, 2017). The visibility and integration of teachers of color into the school setting has a positive influence on the collective academic success experienced by students of color.

WHERE DO TEACHERS OF COLOR WORK IN KANSAS CITY?

In the Kansas City metropolitan area, there are more than one hundred public schools. Approximately two-thirds of these schools have at least one teacher of color in the building. Data for the 2018–2019 year shows that teachers of color are spread out unevenly across districts and their schools in the Kansas City metropolitan area (see Chart 1).

Two counties, Wyandotte County (KS) and Jackson County (MO), stand out for having the highest representation of teachers of color. Jackson County has the highest percentage of teachers of color (9%).

Among school districts in Jackson County, Kansas City Public Schools has the highest percentage of students and teachers

of color (96% and 36%, respectively).

Kansas City Public Schools is followed by Hickman Mills School District and University Academy. In these two school systems, the percentage of students of color is above 90%, and the percentage of teachers of color is approximately 32%.

In general, urban schools have more teachers of color than suburban schools. For example, the percentage of teachers of color in Independence, Blue Springs, and Lee's Summit, three large suburban districts in Jackson County, ranges from 3% to 7%. In these areas, the percentage of students of color ranges from 25% to 44%.

Latinx Teachers

Chart 2 depicts the geographical placement of the Latinx teachers within the Kansas City metropolitan area. In total there are 261 Latinx teachers. The Latinx student population includes 51,198 students in grades K–12.

Two counties—Jackson County and Wyandotte County—together employ the largest number of Latinx teachers, as their combined share of the total percentage of Latinx teachers in Kansas City is 87%. Jackson County employs 174 Latinx teachers, which is 67% of the total Latinx teacher population. Wyandotte County employs 54 Latinx teachers (21%). It is followed by Platte and Cass counties, where the population of Latinx teachers is 10 and 9 individuals. Johnson County is the third largest region in the Kansas City metropolitan area in terms of the population

CHART 1: Percentage of teachers of color in the Kansas City metropolitan area, by school building

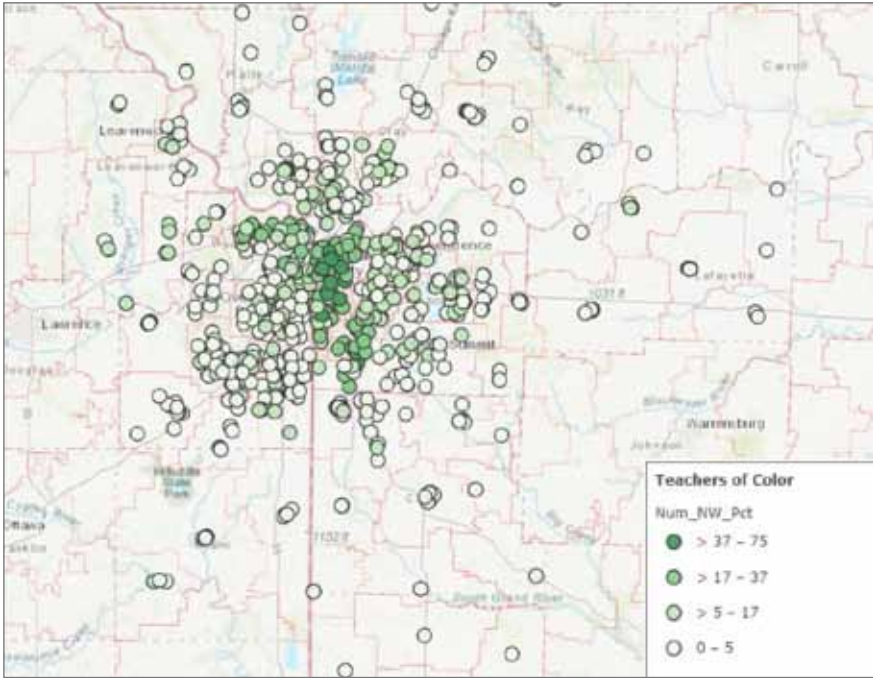
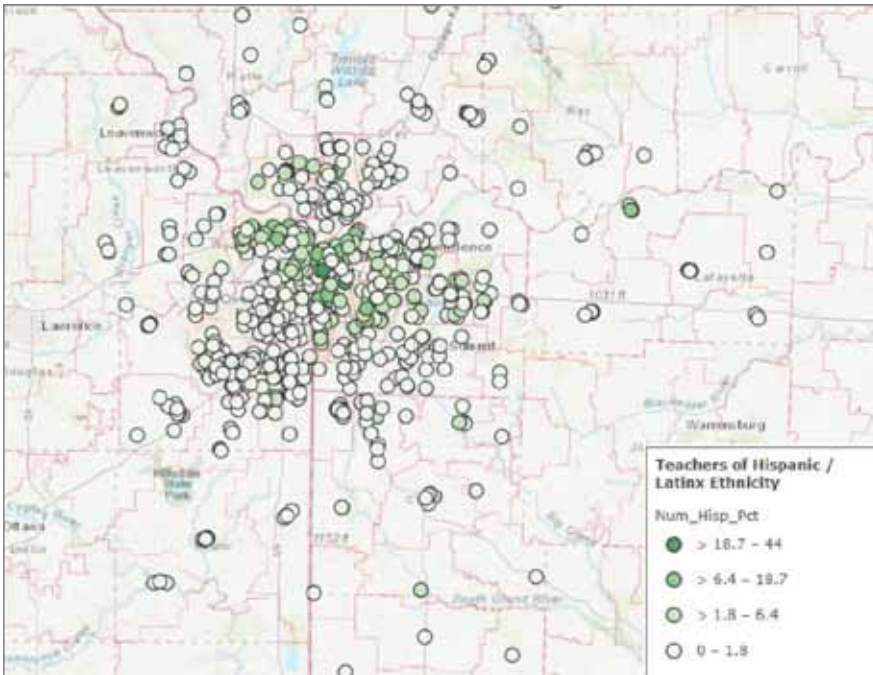


CHART 2: Percentage of Latinx teachers in the Kansas City metropolitan area, by school building



of Latinx students. This region, however, employs only three Latinx teachers.

Two school districts—Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools and Kansas City Public Schools—employ more Latinx teachers than all other districts in the Kansas City metropolitan area. In these school districts, the percentage of Latinx teachers in the building ranges from 5% to 10%. Guadalupe Centers has the highest percentage of Latinx teachers with an average of 12% across all of their buildings.

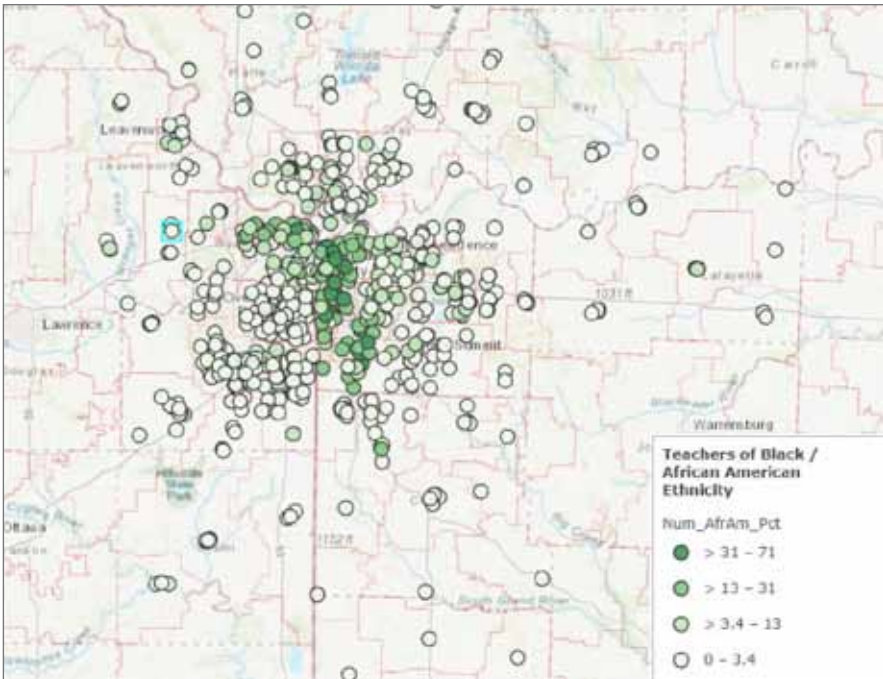
African American / Black Teachers

In total there are 1,184 African American/Black teachers employed in the schools of the Kansas City metropolitan area. The African American/Black student population is 53,293 students in grades K–12.

Jackson County and Wyandotte County employ a sizable proportion of African American/Black teachers—803 and 229, respectively. These counties are followed by Johnson, Clay, and Platte counties, which combined employ 124 African American/Black teachers.

The major school districts in which African American/Black teachers are significantly represented are Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City Kansas Public Schools, Hickman Mills, University Academy, Lee A. Tolbert Community Academy, and KIPP Endeavor Academy. In these districts and schools, the percentage of African American/Black teachers ranges from 30% to 50% (see Chart 3).

CHART 3: *Percentage of African American/Black teachers in the Kansas City metropolitan area, by school building*



TO WHAT DEGREE DO TEACHERS REFLECT THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF THEIR STUDENTS?

Chart 4 provides a snapshot of the percentage of Latinx and African American/Black students and teachers in the Kansas City metropolitan area. On both sides of the state line, the percentage of Latinx and African American/Black teachers is significantly lower than the percentage of Latinx and African American/Black students. The mismatch between the percentage of students of color and teachers of color is consistent across schools in the KC metropolitan area. A state level analysis is provided below.

Teachers and Students of Color in Kansas Schools

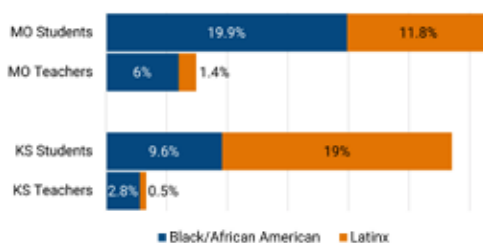
Five counties—Johnson, Leavenworth, Linn, Miami, and Wyandotte—comprise the 24 school districts on the Kansas side of the metropolitan area. Students of color make up 38.6% (n=57,376) of the student body enrolled in schools across these districts. Teachers of color employed in these districts represent 4.9% (n=542) of the teaching workforce.

Among K–12 students, Latinx students make up 19% (n=28,157) of the population, and African American/Black students make up 9.6% (n=14,217). Latinx teachers are 0.5% (n=57) of the teaching workforce, while African American/Black teachers represent 2.78% (n=307) of the workforce.

Teachers and Students of Color in Missouri Schools

On the Missouri side of the Kansas City metropolitan area, there are nine counties—

CHART 4: *Demographic discrepancies between students and teachers*



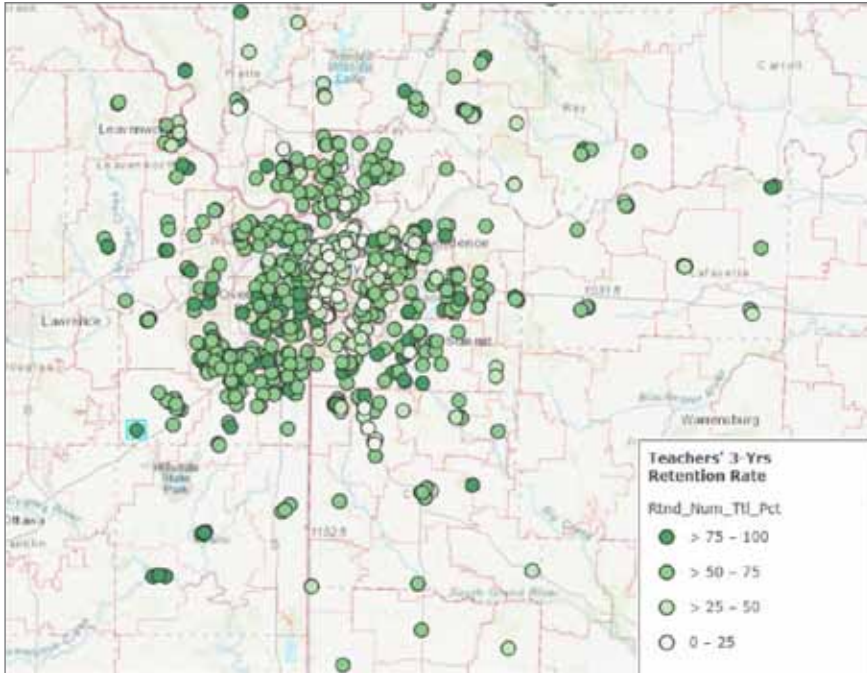
Bates, Caldwell, Cass, Clay, Clinton, Jackson, Lafayette, Platte, and Ray—in which 83 school districts or charter schools reside. Students of color in these districts/schools represent 40.1% (n=77,877) of the enrolled student body. Teachers of color in these same districts represent 8.7% (n=1,220) of the overall teaching workforce.

African American/Black students comprise 19.9% (n=38,637) of the student body, and Latinx students comprise 11.8% (n=22,864). African American/Black teachers represent 6% (n=838) of the teaching workforce, while Latinx teachers represent 1.4% (n=200).

WHAT IS THE RETENTION RATE OF TEACHERS IN KANSAS CITY?

Researchers requested retention rates for teachers of color and were provided with overall retention rates. A follow-up data request has been submitted. The following data provides a snapshot of retention rates across the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Among all counties in the Greater Kansas City metropolitan area, the three-year retention rate (3YRR) is lowest for Jackson County. Wyandotte County, which is similar to Jackson County in percentage of students and teachers of color, has a higher 3YRR.

CHART 5: Three-year teacher retention rate for schools in the Kansas City metropolitan area

The retention rate in Wyandotte County is relatively high (60+% on average), and this is comparable to the rates of nearby counties such as Johnson County, which has a 70% 3YRR on average.

To further understand the retention rate data, the research team examined the correlations between retention rates and the demographic characteristics of students and teachers. The correlational analysis revealed a significant and negative relationship between three-year retention rates and the percentage of students of color ($r = -.43$, $p < .01$) and the percentage of teachers of color ($r = -.45$, $p < .01$). Results indicate that three-year retention rates are moderately associated with the percentage of students and teachers of color in a building. That is, schools with higher percentages of teachers

and students of color have lower retention rates. Further examination of this topic, with a fuller array of teacher retention and demographic variables and a more robust set of analyses, is suggested for future studies.

WHAT SCHOOLS ARE LEADING THE WAY IN RECRUITING AND RETAINING TEACHERS OF COLOR?

To help grow a diverse teacher workforce, it is important to identify the schools in Missouri and Kansas that are attracting and retaining teachers of color. For this report, we looked at schools with a teacher retention rate of 50% or above and at least 25% students and teachers of color. In Missouri and Kansas, these schools were elementary and middle schools. Table 1 shows the schools leading the way in serving students

TABLE 1

State	School	Rate of Retention	TOC		SOC	
			#	%	#	%
MO	Conn-West Elementary	80.8%	8	30.8%	332	82.0%
MO	University Academy-Middle	52.2%	10	47.6%	255	100.0%
MO	Grandview Middle	53.5%	16	39.0%	511	83.5%
MO	Garfield Elementary	57.9%	17	35.4%	450	93.2%
MO	Center Elementary	70.4%	7	28.0%	296	90.5%
KS	McKinley Elementary	69.2%	7	26.9%	326	93.7%
KS	Welborn Elementary	57.1%	11	26.2%	428	83.1%
KS	Quindaro Elementary	69.0%	7	27.6%	372	97.6%
KS	Wm A White Elementary	69.6%	5	26.1%	248	88.9%
KS	Northwest Middle	54.7%	18	37.7%	458	96.8%

of color, attracting teachers of color, and retaining teachers for at least three years.

SUMMARY

This study provides a snapshot of teachers of color in the Kansas City metropolitan area—where they work, the demographics of their schools, and their overall three-year retention rates. The school-level data and interactive maps were developed for teachers, administrators, educational advocates, parents, and policymakers to inform policy and practice.

The Kansas City metropolitan area is not unique in its struggle to recruit and retain teachers of color. Like many cities, our student population is becoming more racially/ethnically diverse, but our teacher population is not. Findings from this report indicate:

- The percentage of teachers of color is not keeping pace with the growing percentage of students of color. In 2018, 39.5% of students in the Kansas City metropolitan area were students of color. Only 7.1% of our teachers were teachers of color. The percentage of Latinx

teachers is particularly low, with only 1% of teachers across all of the Kansas City metropolitan area.

- Teachers of color are unevenly employed across our region. One-third of KC schools do not have a teacher of color in their building. Jackson and Wyandotte counties have the highest density of teachers of color. Teachers of color in suburban and rural settings experience the most isolation, on average representing 5% of the teacher population in their districts.
- Retention rates are highest in schools with a higher percentage of White teachers. The underlying reasons for this relationship are unclear and warrant further investigation.
- Kansas City has a group of schools that show considerable promise in recruiting and retaining teachers of color. A better understanding of the recruitment and retention practices might shed light on promising practices for the region.

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BLACK MALE EDUCATORS: THE MISSING PIECE

CREATING INFORMED CITIZENS
IS ABOUT MORE THAN TEACHING
TRUTH AND JUSTICE; IT'S ALSO ABOUT
REPRESENTATION.

CORNELL ELLIS

Creating “informed” citizens has taken on a new meaning in today’s educational world. The reality is, Black people have been educating our own children for centuries, but now—in 2021—we are at risk of seeing the Black Male Educational Leader becoming extinct by 2040. Since the close of the *Brown v. Board of*

Education trial in 1954, we have seen an ever-declining number of Black educators in the United States. Black schools were closed to make way for shiny, specialized, supposedly superior schools, and Black teachers were cast aside to make room for primarily White women to take their place as classroom leaders. We are in a fight to not just educate our children, but to create informed citizens and critical agents of the world in our students. Our current education system falls short of that task, and the truth of the matter is Black people are simply and overwhelmingly not interested in being teachers.

Over 70% of teachers nationwide are White women, and over 90% of individuals enrolled in teacher preparation programs

across the United States are White. For the small percentage of Black educators currently in schools, the realities of navigating the profession while Black are stark and unglamorous. Black teachers are half as likely as their White counterparts to be retained in educational careers from year to year. The demanding hours and work combined with the trauma of navigating a White world and profession while Black is exhausting and leads to burn-out...and we aren't even mentioning the low pay and secondary trauma we experience as we attempt to guide our students through their development in this world.

What and where is the Black teacher's refuge? How can we provide sanctuary for Black teachers and Black students from the marginalizations that exist in classrooms and school systems? Brothers Liberating Our Communities—colloquially known as BLOC—says the key to refuge and sanctuary lies with increased representation in educational careers and liberatory curricula in justice-centered classrooms. BLOC works to sustain and increase the number of Black men in education through these main initiatives; when there are more Black Male Educators and there is more targeted and intentionally developed content, there will be better achievement among all students.

The question truly revolves around the actual purpose of schools and classrooms. Horace Mann, the father of public schools, envisioned a world where education was the “great equalizer”—a tool and measuring

stick for students in the United States and around the world to gauge their intelligence and ability to perform comprehensive tasks. Over time, however, education has become a microcosm of oppression and indignation. Schools are teaching students, especially Black students, that they do not belong in the education system. Schools are teaching students, especially Black students, that their physical bodies are out of place, along with their cultures, ideologies, perspectives, and thought processes. They are unwelcome, and when students can't find welcoming and loving homes inside schools with caring and responsible adults, they often find homes outside of schools that demonstrate care and responsibility in negative ways.

Black student achievement data clearly show the negative impact of socioeconomic status and racial identity. While race is a social construct, its reinforcement and perpetuation throughout history has created a world where systemic racism is overlooked, and—recently—flat-out denied. The small and sometimes seemingly insignificant along with the overt and aggressive legislative shifts targeting Black students are constantly evolving for the perpetuation of the White-dominant-culture narrative. Students learn from which stories and narratives dominate their classroom environment. Students learn from the stories and narratives that dominate their classroom environment. They also learn from those stories that are excluded from the main narrative.

BLOC works to increase representation of Black Male Educators in the K–12 space in order to ensure that we tell our own stories and include our own narratives. Educators who have cultural, experiential, and linguistic similarities to their students create learning environments that promote trust and learning. Through Affinity-Based Programming, Pathway Exposure, and Anti-Racist Professional Development, BLOC works to sustain and increase the number of Black men in schools. In the next ten years, BLOC will double the number of Black men in education in the Kansas City Metropolitan area, creating a self-sustaining environment of revolutionary, effective Black men in education.

How many Black men did you have as teachers growing up? Imagine a day where every student has had at least one Black Male Educator in their academic career. Our future police officers, doctors, bankers, lawyers, and teachers will no longer be able to equate Blackness with thugs and predators; instead they will see our Black students as children who are seeking opportunities to live the life they dream of. Over-policing and the

mass incarceration trends will reverse as policemen, prosecutors, and judges see their former Black Male Educators in the faces of the young Black men in the penal system. Inequitable healthcare practices will be alleviated because doctors and nurses will see their former Black Male Educators in the faces of their current Black patients. Redlining housing practices will dissipate as loan officers and real estate brokers will see their former Black Male Educators in their current clientele. Racial equity will take place across all sectors because of a higher representation of Black males in education.

BLOC's mission and vision is leading to a more equitable allocation of opportunities and achievement for all students. The students are our future; let us not make the same mistakes of our past. In order to create more informed citizens and truly equalize the playing field, education must teach truth and have a higher representation of Black Male Educators.

In a time and a land where our bodies are constantly being put in harm's way, let's start with our mental shackles and liberate ourselves towards a brighter future.

“Liberate the minds of men, and ultimately you will liberate the bodies of men.”

—Marcus Garvey



BLACK STUDENTS IN A SEA OF WHITENESS: THE CHALLENGES WE FACE IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

COLE RILEY

In my Junior year during the 2016 election, I transferred from a diverse high school in New Jersey to attend Blue Valley North, a predominantly White high school in Johnson County, Kansas, with a student population that was 67.6% White, 12.7% Asian, 8.5% Hispanic, 6.5% Black, and 4.5% Mixed. While I noticed the obvious racial microaggressions, I noticed there was also racism in the curriculum, disparities in who

was challenged to take honors classes, and differences in the funding for schools of varying racial demographics.

Despite the trauma I and students like me experienced in these racially and culturally isolated environments, we believed we were the lucky ones because we had access to well-funded schools. We had more counselors than school police officers. And, we rarely questioned whether our parents could afford the colleges we ultimately decided to attend. However, our success begs the question: Does the concept of “Black excellence” exist at the expense of those less fortunate? And is our individual progress justification for the plight of the masses of people who look like us who are left behind?

The following statements lay bare the stress, confusion, and mental anguish Black students experienced when they found themselves at the intersection of class and race in suburban schools in the Greater Kansas City area.

“My mom can count on one hand how many White people she went to school with. I can count on one hand how many Black people I went to school with. Because of the disparities in how schools are funded, this was progress. While I’m grateful for my education, I succeeded in an education system I know is deeply flawed. It was one that put Black and Indigenous history in the margins. Thanks to Blue Valley Southwest I am accustomed to a rigorous course load which has prepared me for college, but I also grew accustomed to stray comments about my skin and my hair. The feeling of graduating with honors from a school that I despise isn’t favorable. I am grateful I remained myself in spite of the circumstances but I still wanted to feel valued. I thought about transferring every single day, and my only regret is that I didn’t.”

—Emily Ervin, Freshman at William & Mary on track and academic scholarship

Graduated from Blue Valley Southwest, 2021: 1,075 Students, 85% white, 6% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 4% Mixed, 2% Black

“From elementary to high school my educational experience has consisted of the denial of my academic abilities, microaggressions, code-switching, and trying to assimilate. Because of this, I’ve grown more comfortable in predominantly

White, affluent, and conservative spaces, but I’d be lying if I said it hasn’t taken a toll on my self-confidence. Thankfully in college, I’ve been able to find people who support my personal growth. However, I’ve found myself asking for similar changes that I wanted in high school throughout college. One of them is to emphasize the importance of equity and inclusion when diversity is present. If I decide to have kids, I want them to have an education that challenges them academically, but I don’t want them to have the same experiences I had. I’ve learned these lessons the hard way, so hopefully they won’t have to.”

—Lauren Winston, Junior Medicine Health and Society student at Vanderbilt University

Graduated from Shawnee Mission East, 2018–2019: 1,797 Students, 84% White, 7% Hispanic, 5% Mixed, 2% Asian, 2% Black

“Despite my high school being very diverse, we were extremely segregated socially and academically. Being the only Black kid in many of my honors classes and the only person of color on the baseball team, I felt like I had to choose sides. The White people expected every African American to be the exact same and when you’re different, they treated you as such. That’s why I shouldn’t have been surprised when my White coach used the n-word to describe the music that I was playing that day. Despite being the best player on the team, he threatened to cut me multiple times, threw me out of practice because I was “playing catch wrong,” and would constantly yell at me even for things other

people were doing wrong. The whole time I thought he was being hard on me to make me better, you know, like tough love, but when the n-word just casually slipped out, then it all made sense.”

—Nyle Banks, Freshman Baseball Player at Southern University

Graduated from Olathe North, 2021: 2,191 students 52% White, 28% Hispanic, 10% Black, 5% Asian, 5% Mixed

“The real world is predominately White and so, I guess in that sense, I am better at fitting into White spaces than my friends who didn’t go to a school like mine. On the other hand, Sion taught me nothing about navigating life from a Black perspective. I was fortunate enough that outside of school I was surrounded by Black people and spent most of my time in the city, but had I not been raised that way, it can create this feeling of dysmorphia for Black kids who feel like they can’t relate to their own people because they were stripped of all the pride in being themselves. If we want to

improve our educational experience, I think we should really be thinking about opening up spaces that are for Black people specifically. Adding more Black girls into a building that’s flooded with racist students and faculty doesn’t really help us at all.”

—Lauren Graves, Junior at Salve Regina

Graduated from Notre Dame De Sion, 2018–2019: 585 High Schoolers, 73.5% White, 9.6% Black, 6.7% Mixed, 5% Asian, 5% Hispanic

With high school behind us and promising futures on the horizon, we defy the notion that the trauma we endured was good for us because it prepared us for the “real world.” We are focused on building a world in which racial trauma is not a fait accompli. The fact is education for Black students shouldn’t have to prepare us for the “real world” that is plagued by systemic racism, or teach us how to navigate the status quo—it should equip us with the tools to dismantle it. Anything short of that is indoctrination.

Blue Valley Southwest

“Blue Valley Southwest High School (2021 Rating): Olathe, KS.” | www.publicschoolreview.com/blue-valley-southwest-high-school-profile

Shawnee Mission East

“How Does Shawnee Mission East High Rank among America’s Best High Schools?” *U.S. News & World Report*, www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/kansas/districts/shawnee-mission-pub-school/shawnee-mission-east-high-8153

Olathe North

“Olathe North Senior High School (2021 Ranking): Olathe, KS.” *Public School Review*, www.publicschoolreview.com/olathe-north-senior-high-school-profile

Notre Dame de Sion

“Notre Dame De Sion High School.” *U.S. News & World Report*, www.usnews.com/education/k12/missouri/notre-dame-de-sion-high-school-321514

Blue Valley North

“Blue Valley North High.” *SchoolDigger*, www.schooldigger.com/go/KS/schools/1200001644/school.aspx#:~:text=Compare%20Details%20Racial%20makeup%20is,the%20Blue%20Valley%20School%20District

2 steps forward

COLE RILEY

The next generation will have to deal with the consequences of the concessions made in this chess game of progression.

This generation will have the privilege of integration and the consequences of diversity without inclusion.

That means Teachers that are racist.

Curriculum that's racist.

Which breeds students that are

So while we're questioning the validity of neo-segregation we're reminded of the basis.

Separate is inherently unequal.

Bus the kids to good schools and hope for good people.

Better outcomes thanks to better resources that will get you to equal

but Court case after Court case and we slowly resegregate.

And we're still unequal.

So you wonder why the brown kids are bored in class while the teacher is using a black board in 2021

and smart boards are used in the other ones.

But that's how it works right?

That's the real world.

2 steps forward. One step back.

The cruelest dance.

My partner America has 2 left feet and when I ask to lead she won't give me a chance.

I mean she does this to every song

It was the 13th that freed all the slaves unless you're incarcerated and now all my brothers in chains

It was the passage of the voting rights act which eliminated barriers to the polls,

but I guess there's no barriers to the polls if half of them are closed,

but fighting voter ID, gerrymandering, is all that these 21 year olds have known

We're hyper aware of how far we've come, but we also know how far we have to go

So when us students in these schools voice our grievances, and we're told,

That's the real world,

It will prepare you for the real world

Or just wait till you get to the real world

I have to ask

What's a real world education to dreamers, empire destroyers, kingdom builders?

What is it to the militant, anti-capitalist, pacifist, activist?

Better is available

There shouldn't be any compromise in progress

No concessions made for our rights

Two steps forward

Not a step back

DEMOGRAPHY SHOULD NOT DETERMINE YOUR DESTINY

CARLOS MORENO

To understand the state of equity in Kansas City, you need to understand Troost Avenue. Troost is a 10-mile thoroughfare that runs north-south through the city, literally bisecting it such that more affluent, White populations live to its west and poorer, Black residents live on its east side. Recent economic and infrastructure changes have blurred that reality a bit over the past few years, but the data—particularly that provided by the outstanding data set made publicly available by The Opportunity Atlas—speaks for itself. The median household income disparity between those immediately to the west of Troost (I'm talking one street over!) versus those immediately to its east is \$32,000. And when you control for race, the median disparity drops to \$8,000, meaning that when Black folks move to the other side of the street, they still do \$24,000 worse than their White counterparts. There's not much economic gain to be had in Black and brown communities simply by replanting roots.

Now, confession time. While I've been to Kansas City on a number of occasions and have a deep fondness for many in the city, I don't know it well. But the reason I understand Troost Avenue so well is because that same street—under different names—runs through The Bronx, Newark,

Philadelphia, Oakland, and more. These are cities I do know well. In those cities, divided by their own Troosts, I know how their students, especially their Black students, experience school and schooling. I know that these students are thoroughly disengaged in learning. I know that their attendance is low and their dropout rates are high. I know that their access to schools that promote deep, sustained, and productive learning—focused on their interests, talents, and aspirations—is limited, if not non-existent.

Karis Parker is a young and dynamic principal in Kansas City whom I've come to know since she joined the Deep Learning Equity Fellowship, a program that my organization—Big Picture Learning (BPL)—offers to promising leaders of color throughout the country. Kansas City should be proud, as we at BPL are, that it hosts four such fellows in our current cohort. In describing her experience as a school principal in Kansas City, Karis remarks: "In only a few short years, our school system could crush the spirit of students like [those on Troost's East Side]." This crushing is persistent and nearly pathological, not just in Kansas City, but all across our nation. But there's optimism to be found in Karis's statement. The operative word she uses is *could*.

Because here's something that both Karis and I know: This is not the way things need to be. **Demography does not have to equal destiny.**

There's a much better way to provide learning experiences for disengaged youth. The work that I have been a part of for

most of my professional career—first as teacher, now as leader—is in being part of a network that takes a unique approach of centering learning around human potential, passion, authenticity, and love. Big Picture Learning schools are often found in overlooked communities, often populated by disproportionately high percentages of students of color, students with disabilities, and students experiencing poverty and unaddressed trauma. But I say without hubris, **we see them.**

The Big Picture Learning network includes over 75 schools serving more than 10,000 students in 28 states across the United States and 100 schools internationally (serving over 20,000 students in 11 countries). Although the BPL school design can and does serve ALL students, we are known well for our focus on young people who have not had success in traditional schools, typically Black and brown students from economically challenged neighborhoods. You know, the ones you find east of the Troosts.

I say without malice that we've found that conventional school systems tend to bury the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit that we know is budding within the student populations that Big Picture Learning schools serve. We know this because those traits not only bud, but blossom within our schools! Indeed, Jose Rodriguez of the Met School in Providence, RI (our first school) is the National Foundation for Training Entrepreneurs Youth Entrepreneur of the Year for 2021 and was named by *People Magazine* as one of 10 teens changing the

world. Jose and his peers flourish because they learn in an environment in which traditional academics are addressed through real-world experiences and out-of-school learning opportunities through internships and mentorships directly related to their interests. Advocating for and supporting this method of teaching and learning requires challenging systemic racist practices that strip privilege and power from low-income communities of color.

Big Picture Learning is currently partnering with Kansas City educators through significant and exciting work designed to expand real world learning and internships within its larger community. Through this work and through regular attendance at the Kauffman Foundation's Amplify Conference (which I had the distinct pleasure of keynoting in 2020), I have met hundreds of committed educators—like Karis Parker—who are finding the ways in which Kansas City *could* improve equity in education.

I have learned much from my work in supporting evolving schools throughout the country. I have learned that there is nothing inevitable about the circumstances we encounter and the challenges we face. The same systems that structured a school day around bells can restructure them around the community. The same system that penalizes students with detentions and expulsions can reward them with diplomas and scholarships.

The same systems that built our nation's Troost Avenues can dismantle them.



WHAT IS CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND WHY IS IT BEING ATTACKED?

JANEL GEORGE, J.D.

A conservative political backlash has followed on the heels of the racial reckoning and historic 2020 election—and the education arena has been the focal point of this backlash. Backlash in the face of Black progress is not new. The era of Reconstruction following the Civil War, during which numbers of emancipated Black people were elected to office,¹ was cut short by an effort known as “Redemption,”² during which White mobs assassinated Black elected officials and terrorized Black families.³ The historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, which invalidated racial apartheid in U.S. education,⁴ was met with “Massive Resistance” in the form of Southern state defiance of the ruling, including the closure of Prince Edward County, Virginia public schools for five years and legislation threatening the withdrawal of state funds to schools opting to integrate.⁵

The current backlash has manifested as attacks on Critical Race Theory, a theory that developed in the legal academy as a way of examining the endurance of racial inequality in a post-Civil Rights era.⁶ These attacks have characterized Critical Race Theory as “un-American” and “divisive” and claim that it casts White children as “oppressors” and Black children as “victims.” These attacks purposefully mischaracterize Critical Race Theory and use it as a cover for a desire to maintain White supremacy and exclude discussions about racial inequality from public education.

WHAT IS CRITICAL RACE THEORY?

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a legal concept that was developed by legal scholars, including the late Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, and many others in the 1980s.⁷ Bell and other legal scholars examined another legal approach, Critical Legal Studies, which recognized that the law was not objective, but was impacted by social context and other influences.

The originators of CRT recognized that the law could be complicit in replicating racial inequality. Therefore, CRT departs from

traditional concepts that confine racism to individual bad actors and examines how the law and policies can reproduce racial inequality.⁸ Crenshaw, who coined the term CRT, notes that CRT is a “verb,” and not a noun.⁹ It is not a “curriculum” or a diversity or inclusion “training,” but a practice of interrogating how laws and policies can function to reproduce and even deepen racial inequality.¹⁰ For example, a CRT approach may examine how real estate practices like redlining or racially restrictive covenants, which prohibited Black people from buying homes in certain neighborhoods, can perpetuate racial inequality through residential segregation.¹¹

There are several features of CRT that distinguish it,¹² including:

- Recognition that while race is not biologically real, those who are racialized can experience social consequences based on their perceived race;
- Acknowledgement that racism is not a thing of the past, but is still very present in American society;
- Recognition that systems and structures—like the legal system or the education system—can do the bulk of reproducing racial inequality;
- Belief that the narratives of people of color are significant and should be a focus of education.

CRT is taught at higher education levels (most often in law, sociology, or education programs) but is seldom—if ever—taught

at the K–12 level. But features of CRT (as outlined above) could be an approach for educators to use to facilitate discussions about racial inequality. In the summer of 2021, the Kansas Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) issued a survey to over 500 school districts about both CRT and the *New York Times*’ 1619 Project (a special report recognizing the arrival of enslaved Africans on America’s shores as the origination date of the nation).¹³ The only district that responded affirmatively to the question “Does your LEA’s board-approved curriculum include lessons about CRT?” was Kansas City Public Schools, which noted: “We offer an African Centered College prep magnet school that services both elementary and secondary students. The board also approved the 1619 Project service learning and community activism grant to be taught during summer school. The curriculum is fully aligned with Missouri Learning Standards.”¹⁴

WHY IS IT BEING ATTACKED?

Critical Race Theory was virtually unknown in popular discourse a year ago. But, as part of the backlash against the racial reckoning that followed the killing of George Floyd and the 2020 elections, CRT has been targeted by conservative lawmakers. On the eve of leaving office, former President Trump issued Executive Order 13950 excluding from federal contracts any diversity and inclusion training interpreted as containing “divisive concepts” or “race or sex stereotyping” or “race or sex scapegoating.”¹⁵ Among the content

considered divisive is CRT. In response to the Executive Order, the African American Policy Forum—led by Crenshaw, launched the #TruthBeTold campaign to expose the harm of the order.¹⁶ More than 120 civil rights organizations and allies, including the National Urban League, signed a letter condemning the executive order and filed a federal lawsuit alleging that the order violated the guarantees of free speech, equal protection, and due process.¹⁷ The order was prohibited from taking effect by a federal court and President Biden rescinded it,¹⁸ but many states have replicated its language in their legislative efforts to ban the teaching of racism in public schools.

In July 2021, Sen. Mike Moon (R-Ash Grove) drafted a letter that was signed by other Missouri Republicans asking Governor Mike Parson to issue an executive order banning the teaching of CRT and the 1619 Project in Missouri’s public schools.¹⁹ According to an *Education Week* analysis, as of August 26, 2021, 26 states—including Missouri—have introduced bills or taken other steps that would restrict teaching critical race theory or limit how teachers can discuss racism and sexism.²⁰ Rep. Brian Seitz (R) introduced a bill, House Bill 952, that would ban the teaching of CRT and use of specific curricular content, including the 1619 Project.²¹ The bill did not advance

before the legislative session concluded in May 2021.

Teaching students about the nation’s history of racial inequality helps them to recognize how laws and polices perpetuate racial inequality and equips them to institute legal and policy changes. Missouri’s Learning Standards, established by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, outline what students should learn in subjects like American Government and American History, including critically analyzing laws and policies “to determine how governmental systems affect individuals and groups in society in United States history.”²² Meeting these standards may require delving into issues of racial inequality, which have shaped the nation. While the legislative measures seeking to ban CRT may be invalidated by courts, the bans may deter some educators from discussing topics related to racial inequality. This will be difficult in today’s climate, as issues of racial inequality are widely featured in the media, and children may have questions about current events, such as police killings of unarmed African Americans. Continuing to support educators to facilitate discussions that build students’ critical thinking and analytical skills is important in light of these attempts to censure discussions about racial inequality.

1 “During Reconstruction, some 2,000 African Americans held public office, from the local level all the way up to the U.S. Senate, though they never achieved representation in government proportionate to their numbers ... In all, 16 African Americans served in the U.S. Congress during Reconstruction; more than 600 more were elected to the state legislatures, and hundreds more held local offices across the South.” *Black Leaders During Reconstruction*. (January 26, 2021). <https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/black-leaders-during-reconstruction#:~:text=In%20all%2C%2016%20African%20Americans,local%20offices%20across%20the%20South>

- 2 National Endowment for the Humanities. *Reconstruction v. Redemption* (February 11, 2014). <https://www.neh.gov/news/reconstruction-vs-redemption>
- 3 This assertion of White supremacy was accompanied by mob and paramilitary violence. *Southern Violence During Reconstruction*. American Experience. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/reconstruction-southern-violence-during-reconstruction/>
- 4 *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- 5 The term “Massive Resistance” has been attributed to influential Virginia Senator Harry Byrd and it has come to signify the profound opposition to integration enshrined in state and local policy and practice. Virginia’s Senator Harry Byrd is “credited” with first uttering the term “Massive Resistance.” Mark Golub (August 2013). *Remembering Massive Resistance to School Desegregation*, 31 Law & Hist. Rev. 491.
- 6 “CRT recognizes that racism is not a bygone relic of the past. Instead, it acknowledges that the legacy of slavery, segregation, and the imposition of second-class citizenship on Black Americans and other people of color continue to permeate the social fabric of this nation.” Janel George (January 11, 2021). *A Lesson on Critical Race Theory*. American Bar Association. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/a-lesson-on-critical-race-theory/
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Jacey Fortin (July 27, 2021). Critical Race Theory: A Brief History, *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-critical-race-theory.html>
- 10 Janel George (May 26, 2021). Critical Race Theory Isn’t a Curriculum. It’s a Practice. *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-critical-race-theory-isnt-a-curriculum-its-a-practice/2021/05>
- 11 Terry Gross (May 3, 2017). *A “Forgotten History” of How the U.S. Government Segregated America*. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>
- 12 Janel George (January 11, 2021). *A Lesson on Critical Race Theory*. American Bar Association. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/a-lesson-on-critical-race-theory/
- 13 Emily Manley (August 23, 2021). Fox2 Now. Lawmakers Continue Probe of Critical Race Theory in Missouri Schools Despite Results of District Survey. <https://fox2now.com/news/missouri/lawmakers-continue-probe-of-critical-race-theory-in-missouri-schools-despite-results-of-district-survey/>
- 14 419 districts responded “no” to the question. Ibid.
- 15 Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping, 85 Fed. Reg. 60683, (September 28, 2020), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/09/28/2020-21534/combating-race-and-sex-stereotyping> (rescinded and replaced by Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, 86 Fed. Reg. 7009 (January 20, 2021)).
- 16 #TruthBeTold: The Fight for Our Lives. African American Policy Forum. <https://www.aapf.org/truthbetold>
- 17 NAACP Legal Defense Fund, National Urban League, National Fair Housing Alliance File Suit Against Trump Administration; African American Policy Forum Launches #TruthBeTold Campaign. (October 29, 2020). Press Release. https://www.naacpldf.org/wp-content/uploads/EO-Complaint_Press-Release-10.29.20-FINAL.pdf
- 18 Office of Management and Budget, Office of the President. (March 2, 2021). Memorandum to the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies. Revocation of Executive Order 13950, M-20-37, and M-20-34. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/M-21-17.pdf>
- 19 Layne Stracener (July 10, 2021). Critical Race Theory Debate Grows. *News Tribune*. <https://www.newtribune.com/news/news/story/2021/jul/11/critical-race-theory-debate-grows/878681/>
- 20 Twelve states have enacted these bans, either through legislation or other avenues. Map: Where Critical Race Theory is Under Attack. (June 11, 2021) *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/map-where-critical-race-theory-is-under-attack/2021/06> [last updated, August 26, 2021].
- 21 Layne Stracener (July 10, 2021). Critical Race Theory Debate Grows. *News Tribune*. <https://www.newtribune.com/news/news/story/2021/jul/11/critical-race-theory-debate-grows/878681/>
- 22 Ibid.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

COMMISSIONER ZORA MULLIGAN, J.D.

I lead a state agency that works toward empowering every Missourian with the skills and education needed for success. The word *every* is important to us. It reminds us that when we design policies, implement programs, and make decisions about money, we must be committed to equity. The first step of that commitment is understanding the data, disaggregated along lines that include race and region. The second step is thinking carefully about the policy levers available to us at the state level and aligning them with our goals.

Our department works with partners to provide the resources Missourians need to learn and prosper. Those resources include help finding a job, financial support, information people can use to make decisions about school and work, and access to postsecondary programs in which students can succeed. We define success after high school broadly—not just completion of a bachelor’s degree, but also participating in an apprenticeship, earning an industry-recognized credential, or getting a degree.

On the first part of our mission—helping Missourians find jobs—there is good news. Data indicate that we are experiencing

historic low levels of unemployment.

Statewide unemployment has been at 5% or less since 2015—with the notable exception of a spike from March to August of 2020 that was driven by COVID-19-related closures.

The Kansas City region’s unemployment rate tracked the statewide rate until March 2020, when it began to run 1 or 2% above the statewide number in most months.

The second part of our mission focuses on getting people to and through postsecondary education programs. Here, too, there is some good news. Missouri has been making slow but steady progress toward increasing the percentage of adults who have some kind of postsecondary credential. The number of people graduating from our public colleges and universities is 13% higher than it was in 2014, and the number of those students who are members of minority or underrepresented groups has increased by 22%. Many factors drive these numbers, but one of the biggest changes is improved graduation rates. Institutions like Metropolitan Community College have worked hard to increase the percentage of students who earn a credential every year. MCC has increased its graduation rates by about 50% since 2014, and that work continues.

Despite this progress, there are major differences in overall educational attainment between Missourians of different races. About 40% of White Missourians hold an associate degree or higher; for Black Missourians the number is 28%. Even fewer Missourians have bachelor’s degrees or higher. Statewide, 30% of White Missourians

have bachelor's degrees, compared to 19% of Black Missourians. In Kansas City, the percentage of White residents who have bachelor's degrees is higher than the statewide average—35% compared to 30%—but the percentage of Black residents who have bachelor's degrees is the same as the statewide average, meaning there is a 15% gap between Black and White Kansas Citians, and that gap is wider than the rest of the state.

These numbers matter for a lot of reasons, starting with the fact that more and more good jobs require some kind of education after high school. By 2030, 65% of jobs in Missouri will require a postsecondary credential. The number is similar for Kansas City. Unless we create policies and fund programs that increase educational attainment significantly, a growing number of people will be locked out of the kind of jobs they need to support their families and themselves.

So—how do we get better? In terms of helping people get training and get jobs, our most important tool is one we share with local governments: the public workforce system. Local organizations like the Full Employment Council are the conduit to resources that can help unemployed and under-employed Missourians enter or return to the labor market, or find a better job than the ones they have today. During the most recent three-month period for which we have data, the FEC served about 8,000 individuals, 5,100 of whom got jobs. We continue to work with the FEC and its counterparts around the state to drive these numbers up.

We also have many tools we can use to help more people learn skills and earn credentials. We work with local workforce development agencies to enroll participants in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and we offer student financial aid programs to college students throughout the state. In both of these areas, we have room to improve. In 2019, we enrolled only about 1,400 Missouri adults in WIOA job training programs. Other states with similar populations to Missouri's did more: Tennessee enrolled 8,000 and Indiana enrolled 10,000. We are working statewide with workforce development agencies to identify the root cause of our low numbers and agree on how we can improve them.

Data about student financial aid recipients also suggests need for additional discussion. While only about half of award recipients of the state's need-based financial aid program, Access Missouri, are White, the vast majority of students who receive "free community college" through the A+ scholarship program are White. Only 2% of A+ recipients are Black, a statistic that has sparked conversation among legislators about how the program is designed and has led to a directive for the department to gather data to draw clear conclusions about how to improve A+.

Missouri's economy will grow if we have more people working, and more workers capable of higher levels of productivity because of their skills and education. It is essential that we remain steadfast in our efforts to ensure that our programs serve *all* Missourians.

**CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD**

**IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?**



**EDUCATION
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Who is teaching our children matters.

The word “gap” does not accurately define the ever-widening gulf that separates Black and White students in Kansas City’s public schools.

The fact is that across all school districts, be they

urban, suburban, or charter, Black children are at the bottom of the education well, with brown children faring only slightly better. Several factors including poverty and lack of access to high-quality early education, and structural barriers such as inequitable funding systems contribute to this seemingly intractable problem. Research highlighted in *Landscape Analysis: Teachers of Color in Kansas City* reveals that effective teachers are the most important schooling variable associated with student academic success. Moreover, the study suggests that when students are taught by teachers of color, their math and reading scores are more likely to improve. They are more likely to graduate from high school and aspire to go to college.

Unfortunately, according to the *Landscape Analysis*, the demographic discrepancies between students and teachers of color in the Kansas City metropolitan area are troubling. In total there are 1,184 African American/Black teachers employed in Kansas City metropolitan area schools, where the African American/Black student population is 53,293 students in grades K–12. In total there are 261 Latinx teachers and 51,198 Latinx students in grades K–12.

In his essay, *Black Male Educators: The Missing Piece*, Cornell Ellis reports that over 70% of teachers nationwide are White women, and over 90% of individuals enrolled in teacher preparation programs across the United States are White. He posits that Black teachers are half as likely as their White counterparts to be retained in educational careers from year to year due to the demanding hours and low pay.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Increasing the number of Black and brown teachers in the Kansas City metropolitan area will require urban, suburban, and charter school systems to galvanize their collective resources to have measurable impact. The Urban League recommends that:

- 1. Cooperating School Districts and Charter School Administrators collaborate with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Alumni Association and Brothers Liberating Our Communities (BLOC) to develop a consortium to plan and execute comprehensive strategies and tactics to recruit and retain Black and brown teachers. Tactics should include:**

- a. **Starting the teacher pipeline early by spotlighting the teaching profession in middle- and high-school career education and exposure programs.**
- b. **Providing recruitment incentives such as signing bonuses, loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, and more.**
- c. **Establishing leadership development, mentoring, and unobstructed pathways for career advancement.**
- d. **Prioritizing funding to provide competitive salaries.**

What we are teaching our children matters.

In the 2019 *State of Black Kansas City*, the Urban League recommended that the Missouri and Kansas Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education mandate that all school districts and charter schools design and institutionalize Culturally Relevant Pedagogical (CRP) frameworks into every aspect of the teaching and learning process. We recommended that teachers and administrators be required to complete rigorous CRP professional development programs. Little did we know at that time that we would be at war with conservative, right-wing legislatures that are seeking to censure the way that teachers can engage with students on topics of race and racism, in addition to downplaying the role that slavery played in U.S. history and its continued effects today. As of June 2021, 25 states, including Missouri, had introduced legislation or had taken steps to regulate the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT), racism, and sexism. Much of this legislation would dictate what curricula students are exposed to, particularly when it comes to history and social studies. Many of the proposed bans encompass Black history, *The New York Times*' 1619 Project, ethnic studies, and more.

These deleterious local, state, and federal bills opposing CRT prevent educators from teaching what happened in our history, why it happened, and the lingering impact those past events have on our communities today. Far too much of American history has been sanitized and distilled into incomplete and false narratives that mischaracterize the full measure of the original sins of the nation's founding fathers. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, "Those who fail to learn from their history are doomed to repeat it."

- 2. We double down on the 2019 recommendation. Missouri and Kansas Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education should mandate that all school districts and charter schools design and institutionalize Culturally Relevant Pedagogical (CRP) frameworks into every aspect of the teaching and learning process. We recommend that teachers and administrators be required to complete rigorous CRP professional development programs.**
- 3. The Missouri Legislative Black Caucus should convene public hearings with parents, educators, civil rights organizations, and other like-minded institutions to discuss**

strategies to shield local education institutions from the backlash of those forces that seek to censure them from teaching CRT and any curricula that focuses on race and equity.

Racial Climate in Schools

Since the publication of the 2019 report, we have witnessed an increase in racist incidents against Black students, including a petition to bring back slavery and teachers and coaches using the ‘N’ word in public schools. To address this growing problem, the Urban League recommends that:

4. **All school boards re-examine existing student codes of conduct and personnel policies to adopt zero tolerance measures for addressing racial bullying, the use of racial epithets, the use of the “N” word by students, faculty, administrators, and all school personnel, and any other racist behaviors or actions.**
5. The Urban League supports the following recommendations as submitted to Kansas City area school districts by SURJ-KC Education Core, JUST Systems, Elements of Education KC, Kansas City Black Mental Health Initiative, Latinx Education Collaborative, Brothers Liberating Our Communities, SURJ-KC Families, and Racial Equity EdConnect:
 - a. **Require all staff at all levels participate in anti-racist, anti-bias professional development** for up to sixteen hours a year for the next five years (eight hours minimum). **Avoid asking current BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) staff to perform uncompensated emotional labor in these efforts; contract with skilled and BIPOC consultants to facilitate this work.**
 - b. **Integrate culturally responsive and culturally congruent teaching in teacher training and evaluation processes.**
 - c. **Implement restorative practices that replace traditional exclusionary discipline** (in-school and out-of-school suspensions, buddy rooms, and more), in order to reduce the gaps of disproportionate suspensions. **Decrease suspensions of Black and brown children by 50% over the next 5 years.**
 - d. **Remove police presence and metal detectors from schools** (see Denver, Minneapolis, Portland, Madison). **Annually audit frequency of referrals to law enforcement from SROs (School Resource Officers), budget commitments, and arrest and search frequency by race. By 2022 all metal detectors will be removed and police will be replaced with counselors and social workers.**
 - e. **Transform curricula, school libraries, and classroom libraries to include diverse, representative, inclusive texts. Audit English curriculum in each grade level for people of color, increase percentage by 25%.**



- f. **Modify recruitment, hiring, and retention practices for staff of color, and set goals for 30% BIPOC representation at all levels.** Include BIPOC leaders in this process, leveraging community relationships if HR does not currently include any BIPOC leaders.
- g. **Ensure equitable representation in honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and gifted, as well as special education. Analyze referral and accessibility policies.** Include BIPOC leaders in this process, leveraging community relationships if district leadership does not currently include any BIPOC leaders.
- h. **Begin offering high school courses in ethnic studies and history, such as Latinx history, Mexican-American history, African-American history, and Asian/Pacific Islander history. Take audit of high school and middle school curriculum. Increase amount of cultural history by 30%. Replace 30% of White history with another group. Include people of color’s perspectives in 30% of the already existing curriculum.**
- i. **Encourage and amplify leadership of students and parents of color. Create parent/school/community liaison administrative position. Create student admin liaison position and committee to include student voice.**
- j. **Create leadership positions and revise budgets to make these action steps achievable. Audit budget and ensure minimum 35% is directly in reach of these goals.**
- k. **Annually share data, disaggregated by race, related to each of these action steps. Agree to annual assessment to be made public about your institutions and your progress towards equity.**

Digital Equity

- 6. **Support computer skill training for youth, adults, and senior adults through the Kansas City Coalition for Digital Inclusion Computer Skills Training calendar.**
 - a. **Support KCLibrary Tech Access Hotline and Digital Navigators.**
 - b. **Expand the Digital Navigator program in partnership with the Missouri Broadband Resource Rail.**
 - c. **Support public libraries engaged in small business entrepreneur development:**
 - i. **KC Library Small Business Support Specialist**
 - ii. **Mid-Continent Public Library Square One Collaborative Small Business Services**

CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY ENOUGH?

A SPECIAL COLLECTION OF
ARTICLES AND OP-EDS



HEALTH

FOREWORD

SYSTEMIC RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

LYDIA A. ISAAC, PH.D.

Public Health is defined by CEA Winslow as “the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts and informed choices of society, organizations, public and private communities, and individuals.”¹ These informed choices include some of the essential public health services, which are to: create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health; utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public’s health and to assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy.² In order to serve these functions, the systems that support public health must be equitable and fair. As Georges Benjamin, President of the American Public Health Association, remarked in an article in *Popular Science*, “By definition, a public health issue is something that hurts and kills people, or impedes their ability to live a healthy, prosperous life. Racism certainly falls in that category.”³ Systemic racism is a public health problem because the systems that support health outcomes are not fair and do not support optimal health for Black people and communities of color.

In the U.S., the impact of health disparities on racial and minority populations has been documented on a federal level since 1985.⁴ Since then, extensive research has been produced on the underlying factors and consequences of health disparities. These factors such as housing, neighborhood composition, education, employment, and economics have more impact on health outcomes than medical care. These Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) explain why the richest country in the world, with the best healthcare system in the world, has populations with health outcomes that are worse than countries with far fewer resources than ours. Yet, even with identification of the problem, sustainable solutions seem to elude us. The reason for this is that the problem is bigger and more insidious than the individual components. The SDOH are a series of systems that are embedded in the fabric of our society. Most, if not all, of these systems were not created to benefit or support Black people but to passively oppress them in a way that did not garner much attention until very recently.

One cannot talk about health in 2021 without talking about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the inequities that it has laid bare for the world to see. But what we need to really understand is that the pandemic was not the beginning of these inequities; it provided the perfect confluence of factors to lift the veil off of what is really happening



...the pandemic was not the beginning of these inequities; it provided the perfect confluence of factors to lift the veil off of what is really happening to Black people in America.

to Black people in America. COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Black people in both morbidity (getting the disease) and mortality (death)⁵ because of the influence of the SDOH which made us more likely to be frontline and “essential” workers. This is due to many factors, including an economic and employment system that relegates us to low-wage, high multiple-risk exposure positions such as grocery clerks, transportation providers, home health aides, and delivery workers.⁶ When the world shut down in early 2020 and many began to work and learn from home, it was Black children with no access to broadband or computers who were left behind in their educational attainment.⁷ When it came to getting healthcare for COVID-19, it was Black people who lived in neighborhoods with lower quality healthcare systems who

were getting sick and dying.^{8,9} The pandemic showed us how systemic disinvestment due to racism in a community leads to worse health, educational, and economic outcomes. These problems cannot be solved with words and platitudes but only with a deep commitment to improving the environments that support optimal health.

Camara Jones wrote a seminal paper in the *American Journal of Public Health* in 2000 in which she explained why racism leads to differential health outcomes. She described three levels of racism: Institutional, Personally Mediated (Interpersonal), and Internalized.¹⁰ For far too long we have focused on interpersonal racism, the everyday racist acts and microaggressions that Black people face. But we have not made as much progress on the institutional or systemic level of racism that permeates our daily life and impacts health outcomes. From police brutality to the school-to-prison pipeline to voting and medical mistrust, racist systems are having negative consequences on the health outcomes of Black populations. We are especially seeing the consequences of systemic racism and medical mistrust with the vaccine uptake. Black people who cannot access the vaccine due to barriers in transportation, geography, availability, childcare, and paid time off from work are being left vulnerable and unvaccinated. There are others who are hesitant to get vaccinated due to lack of trust in the vaccine sowed by years of maltreatment in the healthcare system. These barriers are killing us and contributing to negative outcomes in our communities.

How do we overcome this? We do so by advancing policies, practices, and programs that lead to health equity. This means holding our elected officials accountable for working on investing in our communities in ways that help overcome the systemic disinvestment that we have historically experienced. That means making informed choices that support a public health and healthcare system that values prevention and wellness over profits. Inherent in the definition of health equity is the fair and equitable access to resources that promote health. Health promoting factors are influenced by the Social Determinants of Health. So, health equity means increasing access to quality housing, education, and healthcare; increasing entrepreneurship, employment, and wealth in our communities; and increasing access to parks, supermarkets, and wellness activities. When we can rid these systems of racist and oppressive policies that limit our access to these health promoting resources, only then can we truly have informed choices that improve public health and advance health equity.

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- 1 <https://www.cdc.gov/training/publichealth101/public-health.html>
 - 2 <https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/publichealthservices/essentialhealthservices.html>
 - 3 <https://www.popsoci.com/story/health/racism-public-health/>
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CONFRONTING RACISM: A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

MATTHEW MCCURDY

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted preexisting economic, social, and health inequities in the United States and has exposed the nation's deficient public health and healthcare infrastructure. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that Black Americans are nearly three times more likely to be hospitalized from COVID-19 and close to twice as likely to die from COVID-19 as non-Hispanic White Americans.¹

Racism and its manifestations within our institutions is a fundamental cause of racial and ethnic health inequities. Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, a former American Public Health Association president, defines racism as:

A system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what people call race) that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources.²

To be a healthier country and to reach health equity, it is important that we name

racism as a root cause of increased morbidity and mortality among Black people and develop solutions that target and dismantle racism within systems of power.

SOCIAL DRIVERS OF HEALTH

In the United States, social stratification based on race disproportionately structures access to health protective resources like stable housing, employment, healthy foods, and medical care. Racism created vulnerabilities in Black and other racial and ethnic minoritized communities well before the COVID-19 pandemic. The legacy of historically racist policies combined with current, more covert forms of racism have created conditions for poor health outcomes among Black populations.

Housing and Neighborhood Quality

The conditions in which we live have the greatest impact on our health outcomes. Black people are more likely to be poor, given the country's racialized economic system, and many of our neighborhoods are under-resourced. The places we call home have limited access to affordable and healthy foods, are far from primary care facilities for prevention and chronic disease management, and lack safe streets and green spaces for physical activity and general wellbeing. The absence of critical resources and services in Black communities is a direct result of redlining, segregation, gentrification, and other discriminatory policies and practices that intentionally strip resources from Black people and our neighborhoods. The conditions of these neighborhoods

contribute to increased stress and poorer, chronic health outcomes, leading to increased risk for COVID-19 susceptibility, severity, and mortality.

Economic Security

Black, Indigenous, and poor people disproportionately make up the working class because the economic system of the United States is built off racial capitalism. During the pandemic and subsequent economic shutdown, we were overrepresented in low-wage jobs that were newly deemed essential, putting us at greater risk of infection. Black people were also more vulnerable to job loss, which increased our susceptibility to a multitude of social and economic risk factors. Often, when people have to choose between paying for medical services or putting food on the table, medical treatment gets deprioritized.

Access to Quality Healthcare

Healthcare utilization has been traditionally lower among Black Americans than other racial and ethnic groups. This is due in part to structural barriers to accessible healthcare and, in part, due to the historical and current reality of U.S. medical institutions acting as agents of violence against Black bodies. For example, during segregation, Black people were treated in separate, underfunded, and understaffed facilities. We remember the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male and the theft of Henrietta Lacks' cells. This violence continues today. We are bombarded with a steady stream of stories about Black birthing

women not being listened to or Black patients being refused pain management. Medical systems have been structures of oppression for Black people for centuries, resulting in inaccessible, poor quality, and untrustworthy care.

NEW PATHS FORWARD

To move towards a more equitable future, we must interrogate and dismantle the racist structures that lead to vulnerability and invest in the creation of strategies that seek justice and center the voices and experiences of marginalized peoples.

Community-based Health

People want to receive care in trusted places where they feel safe. Black people should establish our own spaces to educate ourselves on preventive health and provide vital resources and services in our neighborhoods. We can take lessons from the community organizers of our past. The Black Panther Party established community clinics in 13 cities across the country to provide health education, mobilize resources to mitigate diseases and other chronic illnesses, and provide housing assistance and legal aid. Community-based healthcare is an effective model to provide culturally responsive care in communities where economic, political, and social barriers prevent people from accessing quality services. The clinics that the Panthers ran were critical in the fight to overcome the structural racism and economic inequality that prevented many Black people from going to hospitals and other care facilities.

Training of Healthcare Professionals

Medical schools and training centers must be more intentional about naming racism as a cause of health inequity, and they must develop curricula to teach this. Medical schools still use race to pathologize racial and ethnic minoritized patients. For example, medical students are taught that being Black is a risk factor for a varied number of medical conditions. In reality, racism is why Black people face a disproportionate burden of illness. To transform how medical care is delivered, educators must recognize that medical instruction is biased and must be reevaluated using an anti-racist lens. Frameworks such as Critical Race Theory and the social determinants of health can be used to advance students' understanding of the fundamental causes of health inequities.

Equitable, Tech-enabled Care

As technology plays a larger role in care both in and out of medical spaces, it is essential that these solutions—such as machine learning, big data, and virtual engagement—are designed with empathy for marginalized groups who are most vulnerable. Often, these tools mirror the

racialized biases of their creators and our society. During the pandemic, we saw a huge shift to telemedicine that allowed doctors to provide care to patients from the safe distance of their homes. But this benefit also has the potential to build further barriers to health-promoting services due to our nation's racialized digital divide. If we are going to create new tech-enabled models for servicing patients, we need to ensure that they improve health outcomes for those in the greatest need. Otherwise, these technologies will simply reflect the biases that currently infect and infest our systems. We must prioritize developing tools in an anti-racist way.

COVID-19 is not, as some early commentators claimed, “the great equalizer.” Yes, we were all vulnerable to infection, but Black people and other marginalized groups were uniquely predisposed to carrying a greater burden of sickness and death. We must be intentional about targeting racism as the root cause of inequities across systems of power—including the medical industrial complex. We must mobilize our own resources to create the tools and resources that can protect us from a system designed to kill us.

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1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “COVID-19 Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity.” *National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases*. Last Modified 23 Apr 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>

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ERADICATING RACISM IS THE PATHWAY TO HEALTH EQUITY

QIANA THOMASON

In the quest for health equity, antiracism and economic equity are essential and interconnected. We know there are deep inequities in the length and quality of people's lives, and that people's income, race, ethnicity, and census tract greatly influence how long they live.

Life expectancy in Kansas City neighborhoods vary by as much as 15 years, with the lowest life expectancy found in neighborhoods that include predominantly Black residents and lower-income households in the center of our city. Even in

Johnson County, the wealthiest county in the state of Kansas and in our bi-state region, we see a 12-year gap in life expectancy in neighborhoods that are just five miles apart but are economically segregated.

This injustice does not have to exist. We have the power to shape our reality and mold a future in which people of color live healthy and long lives. In my 25 years as a healthcare provider, advocate, and administrator, often serving resilient communities living in marginalized conditions, I've consistently witnessed a narrow focus on medical and behavioral health issues without adequate regard for the socioeconomic complexity of people's lives and the political influencers creating this complexity. Yet there is undeniable evidence linking race, income, wealth, and health,

which makes clear that policies promoting economic equity may have the broadest impact on health.

We must ask different and, perhaps, uncomfortable questions about the factors that shape our communities and the unequal outcomes they create across generations. When we ask these tough questions, it becomes clear that we are operating in the realm of systems—like wage and education policies, and hiring and decision-making practices across industries and sectors. When we grasp these issues at their roots, it's clear that systems, not people, are broken.

An abundance of evidence affirms that our socioeconomic influencers, like access to healthy and whole foods, safe and affordable housing, quality education, a livable wage, and community violence, all significantly impact health outcomes. In fact, the National Academy of Medicine notes that social influencers of health “are greatly influenced by policies, systems, and environments,” and “are associated with better health outcomes.”

At Health Forward Foundation, we believe that economic equity and antiracism, addressed together, are keys to thriving healthy communities. Race equity is the outcome whereby one's racial identity has absolutely no influence on one's ability to thrive and live powerful and healthy lives. That is a far cry from where we are today. Racism and anti-Blackness is embedded at the roots of most, if not all, of the structures and systems we encounter—from our schools, banking and lending institutions,

our means for public safety, to housing and hospitals. Ibram X. Kendi, a race theory scholar, notes that becoming antiracist requires every individual to choose every day to think, act, and advocate for equality, which will require changing systems and policies that may have gone unexamined for a long time.

Racism, not race, is the predominant influencer of health for people of color, and it is the very issue that's causing our communities to be unwell. In the Greater Kansas City metropolitan region, infant mortality is twice as high among Black babies as it is among White or Latinx children. In Missouri and Kansas, Black women are two to three times more likely to die from a pregnancy-related cause than White women. Even when we account for factors such as preterm births, age of the mother, engagement in prenatal care, and income, Black women are still more likely to experience pregnancy-related deaths. These Black-White disparities persist even after we adjust for differences in socioeconomic status, insurance status, and health behaviors. In fact, the Black-White disparity in birth outcomes is largest among highly educated Black women. These facts beckon us to change the narrative about causal factors and rightly center racism's pervasive and fatal presence in clinical spaces.

While we don't all experience the trauma of racism equally, we all participate in an economic system that positions health and well-being as a luxury. It's a system of economic separatism, which drives some

people into jobs that pay low wages, offer no paid time off or insurance benefits, and traps them in poverty. We see this in the lack of guaranteed and fair wages, knowing that people who work full time earning minimum wage cannot afford median rent anywhere in the United States. These economic injustices have real and lasting implications on health, including the ultimate health outcome—life expectancy.

A landmark study by Raj Chetty and colleagues found that since 2001, life expectancy has increased by about 2.5 years for the top five percent of the income distribution, but there have been no gains for those in the bottom five percent. Americans living in families that earn less than \$35,000 a year are four times as likely to report being anxious and five times as likely to report being sad all or most of the time, compared to those living in families earning more than \$100,000 a year. Economic opportunity is often the difference between access to healthcare or not, and for some, the difference between life and death.

Packaged in Black identity, no matter how resilient and strong, low income coupled with chronic physiological stressors from actual and perceived racism creates an immeasurable allostatic load and stressors across the lifespan that cannot be ignored. The profound impact structural racism has on health is undeniable.

Every day, we work to ensure equitable health outcomes for communities throughout our service area in Kansas and Missouri. By pursuing racial justice and economic equity,

we are reimagining, building, and supporting systems that are designed for optimal health. To build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities, we invite our corporate, social sector, civic, faith-based, philanthropic, and governmental friends and stakeholders to join us in two interconnected antiracist actions:

1. **Redistributing power, money, and resources** to close the wealth and health gap by advocating for economic policies that repair structural inequities and systemically advance Black and brown people throughout the lifespan, from early childhood education to home ownership. Why policies? Racist policies came before racist ideas and behaviors—the result is racial inequity (e.g., poorer health and lower wealth).
2. **Learning and using affirming language and narratives** that first and foremost describe Black and brown people by our strengths, assets, and aspirations before highlighting our needs and shortcomings. Words are powerful—they shape our beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors from which decisions, resources, opportunities, and outcomes flow.

We are ready for a new day, where everyone has a well-paying job, well-resourced schools to learn in, culturally affirming high-quality healthcare when they need it, communities full of economic opportunity, and one in which outcomes are equitable, regardless of race, place, and income.

WE CAN'T BREATHE: SYSTEMIC RACISM IS KILLING US

COUNCILWOMAN MELISSA ROBINSON

Inequality is making us sick, and racism is literally killing us—we can't breathe.

The stark disparity in life expectancy for a Black man living at 33rd and Jackson compared to that of a White woman living at 38th and Main is unacceptable. Our theory of change must be rooted in economic security for all Kansas Citians.¹

We should focus on improving the conditions in which inner-city residents live. Liberating people from oppression and economic exclusion directly impacts morbidity, mortality, health inequities, and ultimately life expectancy.² It is not by coincidence that communities of color are often located in blighted neighborhoods with low performing schools, inadequate housing, low-paying employment opportunities, and rampant violence. Eviscerating the urban ghetto will require intentional policies, concerted action, and enormous sacrifice.

Unfortunately, Kansas City's hypocritical double-standard of economic development is cancerous to our city's growth and a deterrent to efforts to achieve economic equity in Black and brown communities in the urban core. An example of the hypocrisy is how civic and elected leaders proclaim they want Kansas City to be known on the world stage for jazz, but they consistently fail to equitably invest in the Historic 18th and

Vine Jazz District. Yet, they consistently over-invest in other entertainment districts, luxury housing, and Class-A office spaces, all of which are located in the most economically thriving areas of the city.

This same dynamic is true in other categories, including infrastructure, parks, and business development, which begs the questions: Why is it that Armour Boulevard stops where west meets east—Troost—the notorious dividing line that separates Blacks from Whites and poverty from privilege? Why is it that our most distressed communities have to fight hardest to get the least?

The Third Council District has been allocated only \$80 million in Special Obligation Bonds compared to \$1.2 billion in Special Obligation Bonds allocated to areas around downtown and west of Troost (District Four).³ Some have argued that this imbalance is natural, because this area comprises our central business district. I argue that this type of financial imbalance is emblematic of 21st century redlining. Furthermore, this economic redlining perpetuates strategic disinvestment and strengthens the systemically racist system that has oppressed Black and brown communities for centuries. Racism is a public health crisis. To mitigate this problem, the city must urgently make equitable investments in distressed neighborhoods to improve quality of life and increase life expectancy among communities of color.

Our vision for a healthy and vibrant city can only be realized with economic mobility for American Descendants of Slaves and equitable investments in historically

economically distressed neighborhoods. We have the means to change; the question is, do we have the will to repair the current and historical socio-economic violence against the vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized residents of Kansas City, Missouri? I posit that we have all the tools at our disposal to achieve universal well-being and prosperity for ALL Kansas Citizens. What we lack is the unswerving determination and steadfast commitment to do so.

I believe we can achieve equity if we use the tools we have to take bold, transformative action to dismantle structural racism and create healthy, thriving, and vibrant neighborhoods east of Troost. To that end, I recommend that my colleagues on the City Council join me in advancing the following policy imperatives:

- Community Land Trusts: The City should transfer all land bank property into Community Land Trusts in which current residents have the power to set achievable rents and sale prices. Community Land Trusts protect against displacement while advancing middle class development standards.
- For the next 25 years, the City of KCMO should standardize Economic Activity Taxes only on Tax Increment Financing in parts of the city where there is no historical economic distress. This solution protects against financial hardship experienced by

local school districts and charter schools that serve predominately Black and Latinx students.

- Conduct an equity assessment and reform policies accordingly to ensure equitable distribution of GO Bonds, PIAC, Smart Sewer, and Special Obligation Bonds. The city should make a public declaration of the inequitable allocation of city resources in blighted communities and prepare a ten-year spending plan to repair the current and historical damage.
- Reorganize the Central City Economic Development Sales Tax District Community Stabilization Fund. Utilize bond financing to get a better value for the resources. Use these resources to support projects and develop a five-year project plan that includes engaging an external fund manager.
- Utilize Health Levy funds for medical primary care providers to make house calls to frequent users of our ambulance service.
- Invest at least 30% of Health Levy spending in programs and services to address mental health and substance use disorder.

Implementing these policies and procedures will take the knee of oppression off the necks of communities of color in the urban core and allow us to breathe.

1 Kansas City, MO Map: Life Expectancy Disparities Infographic - RWJF.

2 Black–White Health Disparities in the United States and Chicago: A 15-Year Progress Analysis, AJPH, Vol. 100(2) (aphapublications.org).

3 City's Bond Schedule, March 25, 2021, City's Finance Department.

PHYSICS, BEHAVIORISM, AND THE DISPARATE IMPACT OF COVID ON PEOPLE OF COLOR

CARLTON ABNER, DNP

One of the best predictors of life expectancy is your ZIP code. That was one of the outcomes relayed to the audience of a Harvard Biostatistics summer program back in 2014 by Dr. Melody Goodman. Dr. Goodman, an African American who herself is a Ph.D. graduate of the Harvard School of Public Health, was sharing her research on what was known as the “Delmar Divide,” a

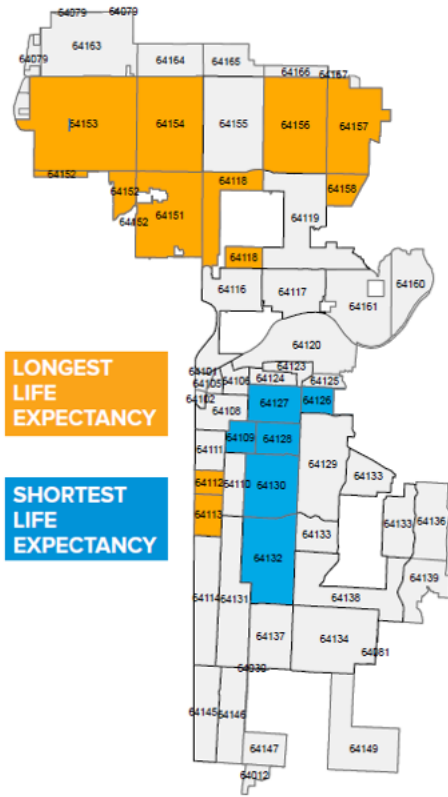
prominent socioeconomic division within the city of St. Louis, Missouri.

In the 2015 edition of the *State of Black Kansas City*, Rex Archer, M.D., provided similar data of clear socioeconomic segmentation in neighborhoods east of Troost and the resulting impact on the overall health and wellbeing of those communities. The plea from Dr. Archer more than six years ago was that if we have already identified gaps in life expectancy in certain ZIP codes, then it is incumbent upon us to implement the transformative programs and partnerships that will address the racial, social, and economic disparities that led to these identified gaps in health outcomes. While progress has been made,

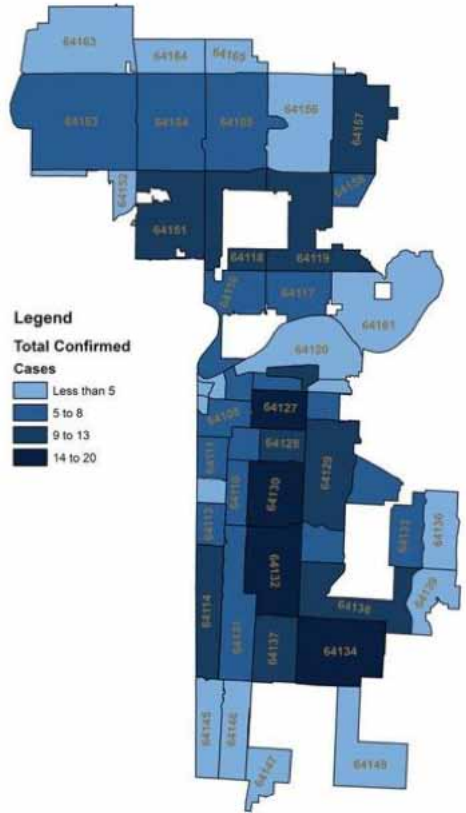


A view of a Black shantytown during the 1918 influenza pandemic. Studies show how racial disparities (such as the overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions shown here) upon Black Americans at that time led to an increase in cases; these same problems exist in today's COVID-19 pandemic. CREDIT: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

Life Expectancy by ZIP Code – 2015 Article



KCMO COVID-19 cases by ZIP Code – April 2020



you can see from the map that Dr. Archer presented in 2015 compared with the Health Department’s COVID cases by ZIP code from April of 2020, there is still much work to be done.

In physics, principles of motion are summarized in Newton’s Law of Inertia, which states that an object in motion will stay in motion. This fundamental principle of inertia applies not only to physics but to human behavior as well. While neighborhoods and ZIP codes east of Troost are freed from the policy impediments and covenants that tend to result in these hyper-segregated

communities, the inertia from those policies is still very much in motion. The same ZIP codes identified as having a lower life expectancy in Dr. Archer’s 2015 submission are the same ZIP codes experiencing some of the highest concentrations of infections from COVID-19. How does one counteract this inertia?

There is a second but equally important component to Newton’s Law of Inertia, which states that objects will stay in motion unless acted upon by an outside force. In a society impacted by centuries of policies and laws intentionally hostile towards people of color, there is no question that

in order to achieve progress, there is need for the development of new policies, laws, and programs to reverse that damage. That is only one component of the “outside force” needed. The other is you, the reader, consumer, resident, and communities mentioned within this paper.

A foundational principle in behaviorism is that there is a hierarchy of human needs. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs range from physiological needs at the bottom to self-fulfillment at the top. Needs like achieving wealth and success and reaching your full potential cannot be realized until foundational needs like your health, food, water, shelter, and safety are secured first. Simply put, without health, there is no wealth.

This pandemic has given many sound lessons on how we see and care for one another. Now that we have tools available to each of us that have been proven effective at mitigating the personal and communal impacts of COVID, the pandemic has simultaneously solidified these two core principles of physics and behaviorism previously mentioned. While there are many things that have buoyed the inertia of disparate impact on communities of color, there is still a need for multiple outside forces to reverse that inertia. One thing is clear: One of the key forces needed to reverse the disparate impact of COVID on communities of color is the people of color

themselves, living inside and outside of those communities. We have to be our own outside force erected in defense of the inertia that has crashed upon us for so long, eroding the bedrock of our communities. Yes, we need connections and champions outside of our communities developing new policies and providing funding for new programs. But we are at a point now where we must not hesitate to take action. In this present moment, that means leaning into the epiphany that we are capable enough and hold the power to produce our own positive force. Right now, that begins with ensuring that we get and we are encouraging others to get the COVID-19 vaccine.

The cost of an ICU stay per day is over \$7,000. The cost of illness for many in our community can and has become a lifetime sentence in a prison of financial instability. Aside from the direct financial impact, the pandemic has slowed progress, diminished our ability to connect, and added instability to an already unstable setting. And now we have a choice as to whether or not we want the inertia of these disparate health outcomes to continue. As for that stifling inertia that has hindered so much of the progress our communities so desperately yearn for—today, you could choose to be the opposing force that our communities so desperately need.

A BEST PRACTICE: UNIVERSITY HEALTH'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

NIKI LEE DONAWA



For 40 years, University Health (formerly Truman Medical Center-Safety Net Hospital) has been providing care in the Kansas City community for ALL regardless of their ability to pay. What makes University Health unique is our commitment to working beyond the walls of our medical centers to increase access to quality healthcare by serving people in communities where they live and work. It was no different during the 2020 pandemic.

In March 2020, our Community Health Strategies & Innovation team, led by Sr. Director Hayat Abdullahi, pivoted from their regular Health & Nutrition Education programming to address needs in areas of the community that were hit hardest by the pandemic. First, the team prepared COVID-19 educational materials that were easy to digest and available in multiple languages. Second, when health data

showed how much more Black and brown people were being impacted by COVID-19, University Health went into action to offer testing in those communities that had the highest COVID-19 positivity rates.

Next, the Community Health Strategies & Innovation team leveraged numerous community partnerships to combat the virus. The team worked with faith-based and social service organizations to set up mobile testing and vaccine sites throughout the city. We are grateful to Morning Star Baptist Church for allowing us to provide these services at the Morning Star Community Life Center. Despite the fears and reluctance expressed by many, Morning Star opened its doors and provided volunteers and all the support needed for University Health to be the first Health System to bring COVID-19 testing to the community. Additionally, the team established a weekly COVID-19 education series that was emailed to over 40 of our community partners to help educate their constituents.

As the pandemic progressed, we knew that the isolation of seniors and the cancellation of in-person schools meant that seniors and youth who rely on food pantries, food delivery services, and free lunches would be challenged with food insecurity and weakened immune systems. Consequently, the Community Health Strategies & Innovation team worked with our philanthropic organizations, C & C Produce, USDA, and community partners to galvanize the resources needed to utilize our Healthy Harvest Mobile Market to make weekly

deliveries to food pantries, which provided fresh produce to over 123,826 families.

After months of anticipation, the Pfizer vaccine was authorized for emergency use. Local health departments required those interested in getting a vaccine to visit their websites and register online. This requirement shed light on the magnitude of the digital divide in Kansas City. There was little regard for those individuals without access to broadband, or the elderly who lack digital literacy, or those with language barriers who couldn't navigate the system even if they could access the website. Upon grasping the gravity of this problem, University Health established a single phone number—404-CARE—that individuals could call to schedule testing and vaccines and get questions answered about COVID-19.

Also, our Community Health Strategies & Innovation team was the first to take vaccines to the community. The team established pop-up vaccine clinics in the zip codes that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and had the least access to the vaccine. Clinics were established at many locations east of Troost as well as the west side of the city, including Morning Star Baptist Church's Community Life Center, the Mexican Consulate, the Jazz Museum on 18th & Vine, St. James United Methodist Church, and Friendship Baptist Church. We worked with community-based organizations including the Black Health Care Coalition, Guadalupe Centers, and the Urban League to make vaccines more accessible for the Black and brown

communities they serve. And we worked with partners like Ride KC to remove transportation barriers for those living in public and senior housing units. Finally, we posted educational videos on social media to disprove some of the myths surrounding the vaccine.

Although we expected some hesitancy due to historical distrust between Black and brown people and the healthcare system, our vaccine uptake rates were much higher than expected. Yet, the battle against COVID-19 continues today. Far too many people remain unvaccinated, and many of our colleagues inside the hospital are weary. But we are still standing. We have expanded our outreach to identify Black-owned small businesses and other job sites that are heavily populated with African American and Latinx frontline workers. Overall, to date we have administered over 120,000 vaccines.

Through it all, we managed to increase health literacy and access to care, address food insecurity, and save lives. We could not have done this without the collaboration and support of our community partners. Relationships are vital and necessary when it comes to navigating the healthcare system and removing healthcare barriers. It is our mission to eliminate barriers and create equitable healthcare systems for all. I am proud to say that University Health stepped up for communities of color in the fight against COVID-19. With the support of our partners, we galvanized an entire healthcare ecosystem.



A BEST PRACTICE: THE PROTECTIVE NATURE OF THE PELICAN IN HEALTHCARE

CATHERINE WILEY

In folklore and in nature, the mother pelican is the most protective animal with a proclivity to pluck her own breast and feed her chicks with the blood that drops from her breast if food cannot be found. The strong protective instinct of the mother pelican intrigued and attracted Dr. Samuel U. Rodgers so much that he made it the symbol of the health center that is his namesake.

Since 1968, Samuel U. Rodgers has nurtured Dr. Rodgers' mission to provide high quality, compassionate, and affordable healthcare for all. Our pelicans on the ground in the form of healthcare workers and staff members wrap their protective wings around an underserved international community every day.

The need for care for this population has heightened during the pandemic, and our workers at Samuel U. Rodgers have stepped up to meet the challenge—always

keeping compassionate care at the forefront, no matter the race, ethnicity, or nationality of those we serve. Our health center's translators speak more than 42 languages, which also helps ensure that language is not a barrier to care.

As a federally qualified health center facing a public health crisis, we knew we had to address COVID-19 head on and meet people where they were. The main goal was to get people vaccinated.

Initially we partnered with the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department and held vaccination clinics at our main campus on Euclid as well as at Garrison Community Center. We partnered with the Urban League of Greater Kansas City and administered vaccinations at the U.S. Postal Service in the urban core. We also held vaccination clinics at St. James United Methodist Church and the Gregg Klice Community Center.

This summer, as the desire for vaccinations began to wane, our health center's outreach team began canvassing specific neighborhoods to increase our vaccination efforts and connect with the community, in partnership with the Kansas City Housing Authority, Housing and Urban Development, and the Health Resources and Services Administration. On these occasions, some three to four hours a day were spent going door to door in communities that included Brush Creek Towers, Victoria Arms, T.B. Watkins, Wayne Miner, and Guinotte Manor. Our mobile medical unit was also used to service patients when canvassing.

These efforts to connect with our community members has resulted in the administration of 13,670 vaccinations since the start of the pandemic, and we're not stopping. Yes, we have faced a great deal of hesitancy, misinformation, and fear, but people are receptive and willing to speak with us. Why? We believe it is because the conversation always starts with, we care enough about you to knock on your door. Even if someone does not get vaccinated on that day, we know we planted the seed.

Samuel U. Rodgers primarily serves ethnic minorities, and health equity is an issue. Many people in this population have underlying health conditions that contribute to the worst outcomes pertaining to COVID-19. Therefore, we feel it is imperative to make sure that people know we are looking out for their best interests.

Our Community Health Workers utilize the Protocol for Responding to and Assessing Patients' Assets, Risks, and Experiences (PRAPARE) Tool, to assess social determinants of health such as adequate housing, utilities, and food. To help meet the needs of our patients and our community, Samuel Rodgers Health Center has hosted food drives and given away gift cards at events.

Our work cannot be done alone. We are grateful for our partnerships with the HRSA, HUD, the Kansas City Housing Authority, Kansas City Parks and Recreation, the City of Kansas City, Missouri, and the Urban League of Greater Kansas City.

Serving community is what it's all about. It is at the core of what drives our team and the reason we push forward against the wall of vaccine hesitancy among many of those we serve. For every "no" we receive when offering the COVID-19 vaccine, I am reminded of a heartwarming story of a young Somali boy, the only one in his family who spoke English, who led his entire family outside to our mobile health unit to get vaccinated. That's why we do this work.

Dr. Rodgers took care of all types of people because he believed in care. We think he would be proud of the level of care we are providing today and that we're connecting with people. Moreover, he would be proud of the building at 825 Euclid Ave., which is in the shape of the pelican, as a symbol of care in community.

Ultimately, we believe that Dr. Rodgers would be proud that we are wrapping ourselves around the community and making it our priority to vaccinate our most vulnerable populations. We need to protect them so there are no more needless deaths.

MEDICAID EXPANSION = ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

MCCLAIN BRYANT MACKLIN, J.D.



In Missouri, 275,000 people will be eligible for Medicaid through expansion, 36,000 of whom are Black. These are the people in our communities already struggling to make ends meet on incomes of less than \$18,000 per year.¹ Of the estimated 16,000 jobs that expansion will add to the economy, 80% will be in retail, government, construction, and other non-healthcare industries in which many Black Missourians are employed.

In Kansas, 165,000 people stand to gain coverage through Medicaid expansion, which includes close to 19,800 Black citizens.² The majority of those eligible under expansion are hardworking dishwashers, housekeepers, healthcare support workers, custodians, nursing assistants, landscapers, bus drivers, child care workers, medical assistants, retail sales people, and fast-food workers. Expansion would create approximately 23,000 jobs in Kansas.³

The benefits of Medicaid expansion for Black Americans extend beyond access to healthcare. Expansion will provide increased economic opportunity through job creation and greater job stability.⁴ Increased economic opportunity improves the social influencers of our health—it opens the door to advanced education, safer neighborhoods, healthier food options, reliable transportation, dependable child care, and reduced stress. When the social influencers of health are improved, often individual health is improved and healthcare expenditures decrease.⁵

The Missouri Supreme Court confirmed the constitutionality of the Medicaid expansion constitutional amendment, and the expansion population can apply for health insurance coverage. It is now important that those who are eligible are aware of this opportunity and know when and where to enroll. Health Forward Foundation

is supporting the efforts of community organizations, hospitals, and clinics to educate newly eligible individuals in the Black community and elsewhere in our service area about Medicaid expansion and the opportunities to enroll for coverage.

We have more work to do in Kansas, where there is no option for expansion through ballot initiative despite broad support among voters. On the state level, the Kansas Legislature must enact expansion. Gov. Laura Kelly introduced an expansion plan during the 2020 legislative session, but the bill never received a hearing. Health Forward Foundation will be working with the Governor's office and others across the state on a path forward for expansion in Kansas.

Even with these challenges, Medicaid expansion champions on both sides of the state line remain undeterred. We all must remain vigilant in our advocacy to encourage our elected officials to expand Medicaid.

Some of our federal legislators are demonstrating this steadfast commitment. In Congress, two bills were recently introduced to federally expand the program or empower counties to expand. We must stand with them and support these bills as viable steps toward healthcare coverage for all Americans.

Health Forward Foundation has invested heavily in Medicaid expansion because it will improve health equity. In states that have expanded Medicaid, the gap between Black and White adult uninsured rates dropped by 4.1%.⁶ Yet, too many of our relatives, church families, co-workers, friends, and neighbors in the Kansas City region remain without access to healthcare. We must continue to apply pressure to expand Medicaid in Kansas and Missouri. No one, particularly during a global pandemic in which Black people have been disproportionately affected, should lack life-changing healthcare coverage.

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WALKING THE BROKEN ROAD OF MENTAL HEALTH: A MOTHER'S STORY

GAYLE HILL-SUBER

As the world grapples with the pain, suffering, and devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am struggling to cope with the tragic loss of my 33-year-old son, who took his own life after a long struggle with mental illness. I am sharing Robert's story because I am worried about the many Blacks in our community who suffer with mental illness and lack the resources to deal with it.

According to the American Psychological Association, African Americans are just as much at risk for mental illness as their White counterparts, yet they receive substantially less treatment. Several factors contribute to this disparity, including poverty, lack of health insurance, and limited access to care. The Urban League of Greater Kansas City's

2019 Equality Index reported that only 46% of Blacks had health insurance and only 56% had access to healthcare.

Data from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) shows that only 30.6% of African Americans received treatment in 2018; 60% of U.S. counties do not have a single practicing psychiatrist.

My hope is that by sharing this snapshot of Robert's troubled life, healthcare providers and policy-makers will take note and do more to address the problems in the system.

Also, I want to encourage individuals and families that are struggling with mental health issues to seek professional care. There is no shame in mental illness. More of us need to tell our stories to bring attention to the need in our community for increased access to mental health supports.

ROBERT'S TRAGIC JOURNEY

Elementary School

Robert showed signs of mental illness very early in life. Throughout his elementary school years, interpersonal relationships were extremely difficult for him. Numerous conflicts with students and teachers resulted in having to change schools several times. When Robert reached middle school, it was apparent that we needed to seek professional mental health support.

Middle School to Adult

From middle school to adulthood, Robert navigated a long, winding road that was paved with potholes, barricades, and dead ends that ultimately led to his death. Between middle and high school, Robert

was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

While at Marillac and later at Ozanam, his therapists and peers encouraged him to work hard and applauded his many gifts and talents. Robert was a multi-faceted, multi-talented, intelligent, and highly complex young man. His creativity knew no bounds. At age 8 Robert started his own business, making and selling jewelry.

As he ventured into higher education, Robert enrolled in Penn Valley Community College. At Penn Valley, while participating with the Carter Arts Center, he received recognition for his ceramics inspired by romanticism, called Halo. At the age of 21, Robert worked at Radio Disney, where he was their youngest Marketing & Promotions Manager in the United States.

Throughout his journey, access to care was short-term and inconsistent. Medicaid coverage was not available in private treatment centers. Consequently, he moved in and out of various in-patient and out-patient programs. He continued to struggle with interpersonal relationships, explosive bouts of anger, and poor decision-making, which ultimately led to numerous periods of incarceration and his adult diagnoses of Major Depressive Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, and Unspecified Anxiety Disorder.

Robert was a participant in the Journey to New Life program, through which he received housing assistance and access to

psychiatric treatment. For a while, Robert received regular therapy sessions with the staff psychiatrist and access to the medication that was critical in managing his illness. Robert was doing well in the Journey to New Life program until he was met head on with one problem after another: 1) his psychiatrist left, leaving him without much needed psychotherapy and medication; 2) his housing assistance was on the verge of running out; and, 3) the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, forcing him into social isolation. This perfect storm of unfortunate events was too much for my son to bear. Robert took his own life in late March 2020.

Robert's struggle with mental illness was an albatross on both our shoulders. I believe the heavy burden of mental illness is also an albatross on the shoulders of many families like mine that lack the financial resources to seek the best care for their loved ones. Moreover, I believe it is the case for families that, out of fear of being stigmatized, do not seek care but instead suffer in silence. Finally, I believe those suffering with mental illness and those who love and care for them are often overwhelmed by the many complexities of mental illness and the problems within the mental healthcare system.

For these reasons, we must share our stories and advocate for the changes needed to improve the quality of life for people living with mental illness.

MENTAL WELLNESS AND SELF-CARE NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER

KIRBY ANN RANDOLPH, PH.D.

The events of 2020–2021 have resulted in increased stress, fear, and grief for most people. African Americans have faced the Coronavirus pandemic, economic hardship caused by stay-at-home orders, an overtly hostile presidential administration, an attempted right-wing coup, and the continued murders of African Americans by law enforcement. Our resilience is being taxed more than ever in many of our lifetimes. We declare to ourselves and the world that our Black lives matter. Although twenty percent of African Americans were able to work from home during the pandemic, the vast majority of working African Americans had to physically be at their jobs. Many lost their jobs. Many people faced the threat of eviction, food insecurity, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, and domestic violence. Substance use skyrocketed, as did African-American unemployment and deaths from COVID-19. We have been unable to grieve as we normally would. Restrictions in travel, hospital and nursing home visits, and funeral attendance have compounded our losses. Politicians have spoken of our disproportionate deaths from COVID with callous disregard in a rush to return to business as usual.

Cheap, unpredictable, and fatally strong Fentanyl “flooded the streets” during the pandemic. There was a dramatic spike in opioid overdose deaths, particularly among Black men. People who were isolated before the pandemic saw their routines and lives disrupted. Misinformation about masks and mistrust about vaccines has added conflict and risk of serious illness or death to all of our lives. Children have had to be homeschooled. Many Black families in Kansas City do not have adequate access to a smartphone, laptop, or reliable internet for their children’s education or for remote appointments with providers. One quarter of the Black population in the United States, 35% of Black people aged 44-65, and almost half of Black people over 65 have some form of documented disability.¹ Some mental health and substance use disorder clinics closed or began to operate remotely. Drug treatment centers and homeless and domestic violence shelters quickly filled and have waiting lists.² Incarcerated Black people and their children on the outside are particularly vulnerable, which has a ripple effect in the community.

How can we tend to our mental wellness? What does “self-care” look like within the African American community? From coast to coast, African Americans have been speaking openly about seeking help to maintain balance and mental wellness. Black people have been meeting to offer support and self-help strategies, including recovery meetings, secular support groups, worship services, exercise, and

meditation classes online for the diverse and intersecting array of identities under the umbrella of African American.³

Black community psychologist Corrie L. Vilsaint, PhD., explains that racial health inequity in substance use disorders functions by remaining “narrowly focused on behavior change at the individual and interpersonal level, despite increased national recognition of structural drivers of racial disparities.” The history of economic marginalization and exclusion by race shapes our neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, and health outcomes. Coronavirus and Fentanyl are the most recent threats to the African American community already struggling with poor education, high rates of disability, unemployment, crime, and violence.⁴

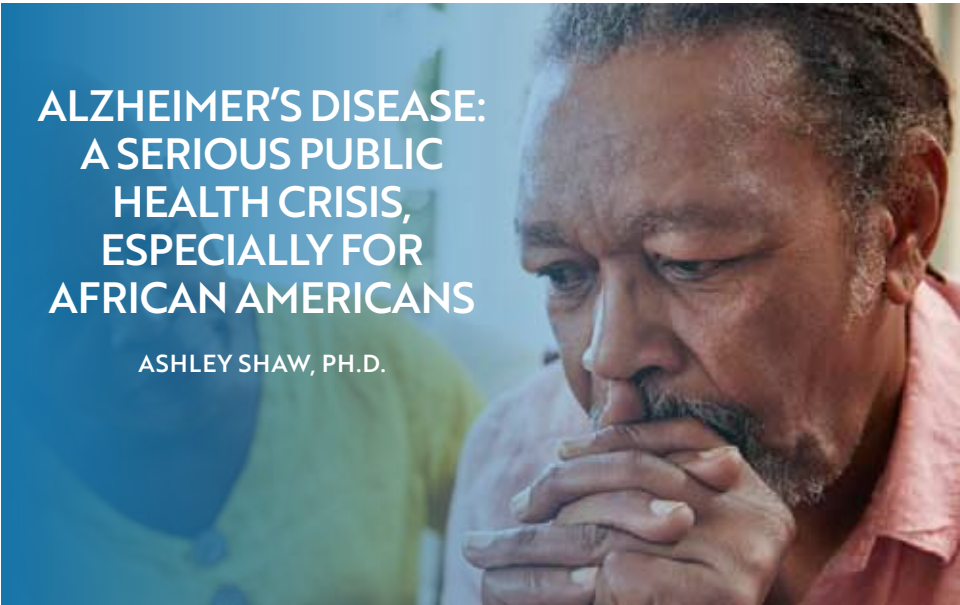
Black psychiatrist Dr. Alvin Poussaint and journalist Amy Alexander recommend that African Americans concerned about the mental health crisis focus on the

“development of strong kinship bonds within the family and community that foster a sense of group togetherness and caring attitudes.” By listening to each other and withholding judgment, we demonstrate our respect and concern.⁵ Experts suggest asking how you can help people get healthy, rather than focusing on changing their behavior.⁶

Many African Americans are willing to consider talk therapy or medication. They prefer an African American therapist and may be unable to afford or locate one. The Kansas City Black Mental Health Initiative, started in 2019, has piloted a program for Black clients to receive free therapy sessions from licensed Black therapists. Therapists or clients interested in participating in the Black Therapy Initiative should email: KCBMHI@gmail.com

For a directory of Black therapists in Kansas City, visit: www.PsychologyToday.com/us/therapists/africanamerican/mo/kansas-city.

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- 2 Dan Margolies. “A ‘Flood of People’ Seek Help As Drug Overdose Deaths Spike In Kansas And Missouri,” KCUR, July 16, 2021. <https://www.kcur.org/health/2021-07-16/a-flood-of-people-seek-help-as-drug-overdose-deaths-spike-in-kansas-and-missouri>
- 3 Just to mention a few: in Baltimore, The Black Mental Health Alliance <https://blackmentalhealth.com> and The Community Healing Network <https://communityhealingnet.org/our-story/>; in Chicago, Sister Afya Community Mental Wellness <https://www.sistaafya.com> and <https://www.blackmentalhealthdirectory.com/directory/>; in Los Angeles, BEAM (the Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective) <https://www.beam.community> This compilation has “44 Mental Health Resources for Black People Trying to Survive in This Country”: <https://www.self.com/story/black-mental-health-resources> This explosion of interest is exciting; however, those who need it the most may be those without access to the internet. They are at a distinct disadvantage.
- 4 Corrie L. Vilsaint, PhD. “Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Substance Use Disorder” in *Substance Use Disorders: A Comprehensive Review and Update*. Feb 15, 2021. Research Recovery Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital. https://mghcme.org/app/uploads/2021/02/Vilsaint_-2021_Racial-Disparities-in-SUD.pdf
- 5 Alvin F. Poussaint, MD and Amy Alexander. *Lay My Burden Down: Unraveling Suicide and the Mental Health Crisis among African Americans*. Beacon Press, 2000, p. 126. Here are tips on what to say (and not say) to someone you care about: <https://bwhi.org/2017/07/25/gotchu-mental-health-friend/>
- 6 The Power of Addiction and The Addiction of Power. Gabor Maté at TEDxRio+20 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66cYcSak6nE>



ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE: A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS, ESPECIALLY FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

ASHLEY SHAW, PH.D.

Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, is a formidable foe. With no known cure and few effective treatments to slow, stop, or prevent it, this degenerative brain disease so far remains undefeated. On a positive note, momentum, awareness, and hope around Alzheimer's are at all-time highs as decades of dogged persistence by researchers are now paying off in the form of a rapidly expanding understanding of the disease.

This is obviously good news for the more than six million Americans and their families now living with Alzheimer's. However, the disease remains a serious public health threat to older Americans, and especially among African Americans, who are two to three times more likely to develop the condition compared with Whites. Yet, according to a fact sheet by the Alzheimer's Impact Movement (March 2020) on race, ethnicity, and the disease, African

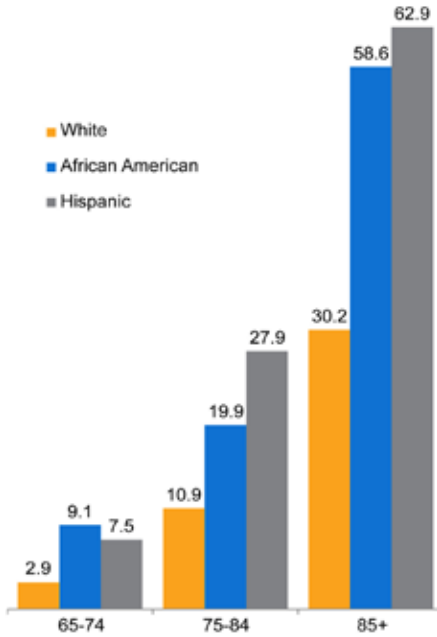
Americans are less likely to be diagnosed. More specifically, while they are about two times more likely than Whites to have Alzheimer's and other dementias, they are only 34% more likely to have a diagnosis. When African Americans are diagnosed, it's typically in later stages when there is more cognitive and physical impairment, and as a result, an increased need for care. (See comparison charts on next page.)

Alzheimer's disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the U.S. for people over 65, according to the advocacy network UsAgainstAlzheimer's. It is estimated that by 2030, 40% of all Americans living with Alzheimer's will be African American or Latinx.²

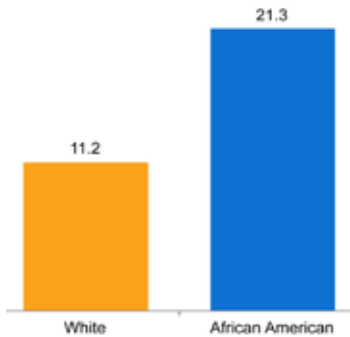
PREVAILING ISSUES

Addressing the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in the African American community has never been more critical. Multiple

Proportion of People Aged 65 and Older with Alzheimer's and Other Dementias



Proportion of Americans Aged 71 and Older with Alzheimer's and Other Dementias



factors are at play in driving the imbalance, including inequities in the U.S. healthcare system that consistently impact the health of people of color and contribute to the health disparities seen in Alzheimer's among African Americans. It is well documented that African Americans experience discrimination and bias in healthcare settings. Meanwhile, they tend to experience higher rates of

conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes, which are risk factors for Alzheimer's.^{3,4}

African Americans also are paying a larger portion of healthcare costs. A study conducted by Lines et al. (2014) found that total medical costs were 45% higher for older African Americans compared with Whites with the same diagnosis.⁵ Another study showed African Americans with vascular dementia accrued \$17,000 in total expenditures compared with \$12,000 in expenditures by Whites with the same diagnosis.⁶

Finally, there is evidence that African Americans with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias tend to live in predominantly African American nursing homes, which have fewer resources and a lower quality of care compared with those serving mostly White residents. In addition, Whites were more likely to be admitted to facilities with Alzheimer's special care units (21.5%) compared with either African Americans (16.3%) or Hispanics (12.7%).⁶

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Despite the bleak picture for African Americans with Alzheimer's, there are clear actions we can take to turn the tide and pave the way for more positive outcomes that lead to better quality of life.

A larger, better prepared workforce.

There needs to be a concerted effort to train all care providers in geriatric-care principles rooted in evidence-based best practices. One example is the Age-Friendly Health

Systems initiative developed by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, which promotes a 4Ms framework (what matters, mentation or mental activity, medication, and mobility). This initiative, now present in all 50 states and multiple countries, has led to better care, less harm, and fewer lower-quality services throughout the care spectrum.⁷

Targeting disparities and inequities.

Efforts designed to directly address and improve harmful social determinants of health are absolutely critical. According to the World Health Organization, social determinants of health are “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age...shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.” Harmful social determinants of health can have long-term effects that can lead to increased levels of morbidity, mortality, and economic costs. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated communities with poor health conditions.⁸

Reimagining long-term care services and supports.

It is imperative that we closely examine the long-term care services that are currently available to older Americans, including Americans with dementia, and apply creative approaches to improving those options. These strategies should incorporate a wide-ranging examination of issues such as low pay and inadequate benefits for workers in the industry and better long-term care alternatives that can be tailored to fit patients’ needs and matched to a facility’s services.⁹

Developing culturally tailored interventions.

I lead Aging with Grace, a successful, free, culturally tailored community education program designed to empower African Americans with evidence-based health education, resources, and opportunities to reduce the risk of developing dementia. Creating similar educational efforts and encouraging community participation in these types of programs is necessary to help spread important health information from trusted sources, while also combating misinformation and misconceptions about Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

Providing cultural competence training for providers.

It is important that healthcare professionals receive cultural competence training specific to Alzheimer’s disease. This is crucial not only because primary care physicians are often the first point of contact for people concerned about memory loss, but also because research has shown that it is beneficial to enhancing provider knowledge, skill, and overall patient satisfaction in other areas of health.

Increasing participation in clinical trial research.

Diversity matters in clinical trial research. Including people from different backgrounds, and particularly African Americans and others from communities at higher risk for developing Alzheimer’s and dementia, is a critical strategy to ensure that discoveries, treatments, interventions, and prevention strategies are widely relevant

and beneficial to everyone. Many African Americans are reluctant to participate in clinical trials today because of the history of unethical research and medical practices in the United States. However, regulations and oversight by entities such as Institutional Review Boards have been put in place to prevent any further episodes of abuse and to protect all participants from being taken advantage of in medical research. Locally, Kansas City is home to the University of Kansas Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (KU ADRC), one of 31 National Institute on Aging-designated ADRCs in the nation. The National Institute on Aging is part of the National Institutes of Health. As part of its mission to prevent and cure Alzheimer's Disease, the KU ADRC offers many clinical research trials, and it is always seeking volunteers for its studies. Email kuadc@kumc.edu or call 913-588-0555 for more information.

CONCLUSION

Alzheimer's disease is a serious public health threat for African Americans, who are at higher risk for developing the condition compared with Whites. There are many contributing factors to this inequity, such as inequalities and discrimination in the U.S. healthcare system and higher rates of conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure that are risk factors for Alzheimer's disease.

Building a better prepared workforce, targeting disparities and inequities, remodeling long-term care services and supports, developing culturally tailored interventions, and increasing participation in clinical trial research and cultural competence training for providers are all actions we can take that will improve outcomes and quality of life for African Americans with Alzheimer's and their families.

- 1 Association As. *Fact Sheet: Race, Ethnicity, and Alzheimer's*. https://www.alz.org/aaic/downloads2020/2020_Race_and_Ethnicity_Fact_Sheet.pdf
- 2 UsAgainstAlzheimer's. *Social Inequities in Counties Hard Hit by Alzheimer's Disease among Blacks and Latinos*. 2020. <https://www.usagainstalzheimer.org/press/new-report-reveals-deep-social-inequities-counties-hard-hit-alzheimers-disease-among-blacks#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%20by,will%20be%20Latino%20or%20Black>
- 3 Forde AT, Sims M, Muntner P, et al. *Discrimination and Hypertension Risk among African Americans in the Jackson Heart Study*. *Hypertension*. Sep 2020; 76(3): 715-723. doi:10.1161/hypertensionaha.119.14492
- 4 Beeri MS, Bendlin BB. *The link between type 2 diabetes and dementia: From biomarkers to treatment*. *Lancet Diabetes Endocrinol*. Sep 2020; 8(9): 736-738. doi:10.1016/s2213-8587(20)30267-9
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- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.

CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

**IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?**



HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines health equity as the attainment of the highest level of health for all people. The root causes of health inequity can be directly linked to a failure to address these population-

level factors. In addition, linkages between science, policy, and practice are critical to achieving health equity.¹

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions (CDC) Paving the Road to Health Equity resource, the implementation of research, policies, and programs that address social determinants of health to reduce health disparities are essential components of effective health equity initiatives. Specifically, program design elements should combine sociodemographic characteristics, multisectoral collaboration, community engagement, and rigorous planning and evaluation. The public health infrastructure required for achieving health equity should be responsive to current and emerging priorities and capable of providing the foundation for developing, planning, implementing, and evaluating health initiatives. Pursuant to these guidelines, the Urban League of Greater Kansas City, in concert with Health Forward and a broad-based coalition of community-based and civic organizations, recommends the following:

- 1. Protect Medicaid expansion in Missouri and expand Medicaid in Kansas.**
- 2. Increase funding for, and improve administration of, public health infrastructure and resources:** Missouri and Kansas are uniquely disadvantaged in the prevention, response, and recovery from COVID-19 and preventing future pandemics and other public health crises due to bi-state underinvestment/disinvestment in public health. Missouri ranks 41st and Kansas ranks 40th in 2020 public health spending compared to other states at \$61 and \$64 respectively.
- 3. Address the social and political influencers of health that contribute to health injustices.** Specific priorities include:
 - a. Address racism as the primary social influencer of health for people of color. Create a coordinated statewide effort (in Missouri and Kansas) to collect, standardize, and meaningfully use patients' self-reported Race, Ethnicity, and Language (R.E.L.) data for all health and public health entities, including laboratories.** This effort will make it possible to identify and address inequities more broadly and effectively.

b. Advance digital equity as the emerging super social influencer of health. Increase broadband access and utilization in urban communities that do not reliably have it and achieve payment and benefit parity for telemedicine/tele-behavioral health/virtual care in Missouri and Kansas.

c. Improve health by investing in safe and thriving communities, including the increasing availability of affordable and quality housing and transportation, and implementing reparative economic policies that redistribute power, money, and resources to people of color.

- 4.** Violent crime is a threat to public health. Violent crimes increased nationwide during 2020. According to new data from the FBI, Kansas City has the eighth highest violent crime rate in the U.S.² It had 7,919 violent crimes in 2020, a 9.2% increase over the prior year. However, Kansas City's homicide rate has dropped 24% over the past year, a trend that is not happening in other cities.³

Focusing on violent crime solely through the lens of law enforcement and criminal justice will not result in measurable or sustainable reductions in violent crimes and homicides in our community. The American Public Health Association (APHA), whose mission is to improve the health of the public and achieve equity in health status, proposes that **a comprehensive system is needed to prevent the loss of 60,000 lives and countless traumas each year**. APHA asserts that current efforts to reduce violence have not been sufficiently effective.

The current fragmented approach that leans heavily on the justice system needs to be updated to an integrated one that supports extensive cross-sectoral collaboration with an emphasis on health.⁴ This will allow all agencies to be involved and held accountable for preventing violence and its health effects. In this approach, health departments, hospitals, schools, universities, nonprofit organizations, and justice systems share data on all forms of violence, identify protocols for screenings and referrals, develop and enhance programs and policies to prevent and reduce violence, and use data to continuously increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts. **A unified effort that works mainly through existing infrastructure, addresses systemic and institutionalized trauma, and connects the health sector to other sectors** is the most effective way to address the violence that devastates so many American communities and jeopardizes the health of the nation.⁵

- a. Reallocate City of KCMO public safety revenues into community-based initiatives** that mitigate various risk factors that increase susceptibility to violence; and address environmental factors such as employment, education, housing, safe spaces, equity, and social cohesion.

b. Community Engagement: Grassroots mobilization of community members is also essential for improving health, in particular by holding systems accountable and changing social norms to prevent violence rather than accept it. It is critical that members of impacted communities be deeply involved in all aspects of development, implementation, and evaluation of the components of this integrated, collaborative health system.⁶

5. Addressing Law Enforcement Violence as a Public Health Issue: Law enforcement violence is a critical public health issue. The APHA states, “Physical and psychological violence that is structurally mediated by the system of law enforcement results in deaths, injuries, trauma, and stress that disproportionately affect marginalized populations (e.g., people of color; immigrants, individuals experiencing houselessness; people with disabilities; the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer [LGBTQ] community; individuals with mental illness; people who use drugs; and sex workers).” Among other factors, misuse of policies intended to protect law enforcement agencies has enabled limited accountability for these harms. The Urban League’s Law Enforcement Accountability Task Force has documented numerous incidents of police violence (excessive and deadly force) on communities of color, particularly Blacks, at the hands of the Kansas City Police Department. Moreover, the 2020 Black and Hispanic Equality Indexes provide empirical evidence of racial profiling by law enforcement. Also, according to the APHA, inappropriate stops by law enforcement are one form of psychological violence with serious implications for public health. Even in the absence of physical violence, several studies have shown that stops perceived as unfair, discriminatory, or intrusive are associated with adverse mental health outcomes, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder.⁷ The Urban League’s Police Accountability Task Force endorses the following APHA recommendations for actions by local authorities to mitigate these issues:

- a. Improve surveillance and reporting of law enforcement violence, and eliminate policies and practices that facilitate disproportionate violence against specific populations** (including laws criminalizing these populations).
- b. Institute robust law enforcement accountability measures.**

1 https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/publications/health_equity/index.html

2 <https://fox4kc.com/news/fbi-data-kansas-city-ranks-in-top-10-of-highest-violent-crime-rates-in-u-s/>

3 Ibid.

4 <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2019/01/28/violence-is-a-public-health-issue>

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2019/01/29/law-enforcement-violence>

CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY ENOUGH?

A SPECIAL COLLECTION OF
ARTICLES AND OP-EDS



SOCIAL JUSTICE

FOREWORD

LEFT BLACK AND BLUE

REV. DR. VERNON PERCY HOWARD, JR.

While most Whites in America view local law enforcement agencies as comforting defenders of their rights, privileges, safeties, and protections, such is not the reality for a great segment of Black Americans in the United States. The presence of “Blue,” that symbolic word that has come to symbolize endearment, respect, and honor in most majority communities and in the larger majority culture, has come to be in Black America a system infected by America’s original sin of racism and a violent system of brutality and oppression that is to be feared, avoided, challenged, or transformed, and for some, even defunded and made obsolete. While much of mainstream Black America holds to an ardent desire and need for law enforcement presence in local Black communities across this country, historic and present-day facts reveal Black America is scarred, terrorized, and traumatized by its long and painful experience with law enforcement. Reflected broadly across the country, and in many major cities in the United States such as Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago, New York City, and of course, Kansas City, Missouri, is the presence of a Civil Rights crisis pertaining to the policing of Blacks that is long-standing and includes current day patterns of widespread excessive force, brutality, and killing of unarmed Black men and women.

However, the current day patterns did not emerge isolated from a vacuum of contemporary factors. The policing of Blacks in U.S. history has been replete with widespread atrocities by law enforcement agencies and their informal allies, which too often have failed to protect Blacks from violence, and what is more, have functioned in society as actors from whom Blacks have had to seek protection.

This writer frames Black history within six major eras, all of which have contained their share of unique manifestations of law enforcement terror and brutality against Blacks. The first era is the obvious era of slavery, that shameful period in American history lasting some 250 years beginning with the 1619 inauguration of organized, legal trading of Africans and their descendants as private property to be used as laborers by mostly colonial Europeans and post-revolutionary American landowners. This crucifying age of “chattel slavery” afforded Blacks no status as full members of humanity by law, and thus provided for them no protections from violence. Through to the 1863 slave-freeing Emancipation Proclamation, law enforcement protection during this period was made invalid amid common murders and

Alabama State Trooper swings his baton at the head of the then-25-year-old U.S. Congressman John Lewis during the attempted march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama on March 7, 1965.

BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

assaults against Africans and their seed-born posterity on native soil. This historic fact signals that Black policing's failures have included not just violence perpetrated by the institution of policing itself but also lack of protection from violence, an equally troubling social, political, and cultural phenomenon. The paralleling Slave Patrols noted by Michael A. Robinson in *Black Bodies on the Ground:*



In the Southern colonies, slave patrols were established to capture and punish enslaved people who ran away. The slave patrols of the South are the first version of police organizations as we know them today. South Carolina formed the first patrol in 1704, ordering its militia to punish any enslaved person caught away from home without a pass.

Policing Disparities in the African American Community (2017), were authorized systems of law enforcement to protect and reinforce the institution of slavery. Lynchings, other forms of murder, sexual assaults against Black men and women and children, including torture, whippings, castrations, maimings, and other forms of beatings were inflicted by private slave owners and slave patrol “officers” with impunity.

Even within the subsequent two eras of Reconstruction (1865–1896) and Jim Crow (1896–1954), racism in law enforcement against Blacks remained, and failure to protect Blacks from violence continued. Connie Hassett-Walker in *How You Start is How You Finish: The Slave Patrol and Jim Crow Origins of Policing* (2021), notes the Black Codes, which were laws passed shortly after the freeing of slaves in 1865 that placed rules on where they could work, how much they could make, and how and where they could travel. The symbiotic relationship between racist laws and the force of police which uphold them is that dual evil threading constantly within the fabric of the historic policing of Blacks. Current-day Black bodies on the ground are emblematic and systematic of Black bodies hanging as strange fruit from the poplar trees of states like Arkansas, as grievously crooned in 1939 by prophetic vocalist Billie Holiday in her song, “Strange Fruit.” If Black bodies were not hung from trees or assaulted to whatever degree necessary to return them to their slave masters, then vagrancy laws instituted during these periods in other Southern states like Alabama were enforced by “local sheriffs and constables” (Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II*, 2008). Blackmon notes sly and malicious laws ensued post-slavery and into Jim Crow, enforced by officers who aided to re-subjugate Blacks and further perpetuate social malignment and economic exploitation, including forcing orphans of freed slaves ordered back to their former masters.

The mid 20th-century Civil Rights and Black Power movements were not vaccinated from the long tenure and terror of racism against Blacks in law enforcement. How so very lock stock it is that in places like Selma and Birmingham, Alabama, the images of body-bruising water from hoses, bone-shattering billy clubs in the hands of police, and skin-piercing canines unleashed to keep Blacks from protesting and securing their rights to vote in the American democracy awakened the moral conscience of a nation even into the mid-20th century.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded an audience in 1963 in a speech titled *Hammer on Civil Rights* of the clear presence of racism in policing. He said, “The most tragic and widespread violations [of Civil Rights] occur in the areas of police brutality and the enforcement against the Negro of obviously illegal state statutes. For many White Americans in the North there is little comprehension of the grossness of police behavior and its wide-spread practice.” Equally worth noting is the tenor and tenets of Black Nationalism that pulsed through the veins and arteries of the Black Power Movement that paralleled the Civil Rights movement and ushered into the 1970s a tone that called Black people to the recognition of the strategies of armed self-defense and even self-policing through the mobilizing and community organizing of the Black Panther Party for Self-defense, which included a call to an “immediate end to police brutality and the murder of Black people” (Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, 2016). Leaders such as Angela Davis, Bobby Seale, Stokely Carmichael, and Huey P. Newton provided intellectual and inspirational resource and agency to Blacks in the face of continued racist policing.

In more recent eras commencing with the transition into the last two decades of the 20th century, America remained quagmired with the symptoms of police brutality and terror against Black citizens like a virus it could not shake. The eras of Black Exceptionalism (1981–2008) and Black Lives Matter (2008–present) have presented no relief for Blacks from the scourge of racist policing. Rodney King’s merciless beating in front of the world in Los Angeles, California, in 1991 by multiple law enforcement officers was the reminder to Blacks and to the world that law enforcement is still sickened by the ravages of racism when it comes to policing Blacks. The TV show *A Different World* was blooming. *The Cosby Show* had blown up. *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* was about to. And, of course, George Jefferson had already moved on up. But not far enough or high enough to miss unarmed Rodney King seen massively beaten by multiple White police officers in Los Angeles. No number of increased Black millionaires, new national Black magazine publishers, or Black-owned cable TV stations accessing American economic prosperity for the Black “exceptions” could hide the nation from the reminder that racism in policing was still here and doing well and that mass incarceration, an extension of the system of law enforcement, was about to usher millions of new Black men into prisons across the country.

By the time 2008 rolled around, a Black man with an African father occupied the office George Washington and Thomas Jefferson had held. America had a new sense of hope for the eradication of racism in policing. Until 2012, when President Barack Obama had to appear on global TV explaining to the world how a vigilante in an American suburb killed a 17-year-old Black teenager named Trayvon Martin while he was carrying candy and iced tea because he looked suspicious. Meanwhile the instances of excessive force, racial profiling, and the killing of unarmed Black men and women in American cities began to burgeon. And the burgeoning continued and continues.



The March on Kansas City for racial justice and peace across the metro was held in Martin Luther King's honor on September 4, 2020.

This explains why the summer of 2020 in America saw protests rise in almost every major urban city and even in some rural and suburban enclaves like Springfield, Missouri; Mission, Kansas; and Branson, Missouri, where “Blue” typically meant safety, respect, honor, and service. Yet, those protests in rural and suburban areas were led

by conscious, conscience-touched, soul-healthy Whites who possessed too much humanity and spirituality inside themselves to stomach Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin’s knee on unarmed Black American George Floyd’s neck for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds while Mr. Floyd sputtered “I CAN’T BREATHE” before eventually dying—for nothing more than the “suspicion” of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill.

What happened to Mr. Floyd does not happen to White people in America. And White Americans too viewed the incident as counterfeit law enforcement, took to the streets, locked arms with Black Americans, and said enough is enough. White people showed up to march and protest and help Black America force this country to change its laws and its personnel and its systems and its policies so that encounters with law enforcement do not leave Blacks unnecessarily black and blue.



STEPPING ON THE CONSTITUTION: THE HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE JUDICIARY IN THE PROTECTION OF UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION

HONORABLE JOHN M. TORRENCE, J.D.

“...what’s past is prologue.”

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

For twenty years, I have had the privilege of serving as a trial judge in the Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri. While I take great pride in our Court, we should remember that the judiciary has not always done its job of enforcing our Constitution. Moreover, to assess and evaluate emerging trends in recent years, we should recall the role of the judiciary in the shameful parts of our history.

BACKGROUND

The *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case was an early opportunity for the U.S. Supreme Court to enforce the Constitution in favor of oppressed African Americans. Instead, Chief Justice Roger Taney, himself born into Southern aristocracy, wrote that no African American, whether enslaved or free, was a citizen of this nation and, if enslaved, they remained the property of their owner. Following the end of the Civil War, the tragic period of Reconstruction began. As Reconstruction failed in 1877, support for the rights of African Americans dwindled. State and local legislatures began to enact the Jim Crow laws. With the force of criminal penalties, these laws created segregated schools and public accommodations.

Although the 1875 Civil Rights Act clearly stated that all races were entitled to equal treatment in public accommodations, the Supreme Court’s Civil Rights Cases in 1883

ruled that the law did not apply to private persons or corporations. In effect, the Supreme Court sanctioned the practice of private segregation.

THE PLESSY CASE

The Louisiana legislature passed the Separate Car Act in 1890. The law required railroads operating in Louisiana to provide “equal but separate accommodations” for White and African American passengers. If a passenger entered a forbidden car, they could be convicted of a crime and fined or imprisoned in jail for up to 20 days.

A group of Creole professionals in New Orleans known as the Committee of Citizens decided to challenge the Separate Car Act. Homer Plessy, a person of mixed race, was selected by the Committee of Citizens to test the law. Following Plessy’s arrest, Judge Ferguson overruled the constitutional challenge and convicted and fined Plessy \$25. Plessy appealed to the Supreme Court of Louisiana. He lost. And, in case we’ve forgotten that institutional racism was embraced by Northern states, the Louisiana Court relied on opinions from the Supreme Courts of Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, which held that “This prejudice, if it exists, is not created by law, and probably cannot be changed by law.” The Pennsylvania law held that: “To assert separateness is not to declare inferiority.... It is simply to say that following the order of Divine Providence, human authority ought not to compel these widely separated races to intermix.”

The U.S. Supreme Court granted *certiorari* and, in a 7-1 ruling, affirmed the Supreme Court of Louisiana. The majority opinion was written by a Northerner, Justice Henry Billings Brown. He wrote, “If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.” The powerful dissent was written by Justice John Marshall Harlan, the descendant of a wealthy slave-owning family from Kentucky. Declaring that the Constitution is “color-blind and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens,” Justice Harlan was prescient in predicting that the majority decision would stimulate aggression upon African American citizens and further, that the decision would “encourage belief that it is possible, by means of state enactment, to defeat the beneficent purpose which the people of the United States had in view when they adopted the recent amendments of the Constitution.”

Sadly, no great national protest followed. The decision was lightly reported on by the press and for most people, segregation that was enacted by legislatures and sanctioned by the judiciary became a part of daily life for the next 60 years until *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954.

BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

By the 1950s, segregation laws were deeply embedded in the United States educational system. We all know the unanimous holding of the *Brown* case: Segregation in public education is a denial of the equal protection of laws. Writing for the Court, Chief Justice

Earl Warren held that “To separate some children from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” The unanimous decision in *Brown* is arguably the most powerful opinion ever issued by the Court. But, again illustrating the history of judicial reluctance to enforce equal protection, the back story shows that the case nearly took a different turn.

Brown was first argued to the Court in 1953. The Justices were divided. Chief Justice Vinson, from Kentucky, thought *Plessy* should be upheld. Several others were undecided but leaning toward upholding *Plessy*. Four justices seemed to be committed to overturning *Plessy*. Several justices were genuinely concerned about outbreaks of violence if segregation were condemned. The Court decided in June 1953 to hear additional arguments in the case. However, Chief Justice Vinson suddenly died from a heart attack in September. President Eisenhower nominated the former Governor of California, Earl Warren, to replace Vinson. Not long after his confirmation as Chief Justice, Warren called a special meeting of the Court in December of 1953 to specifically discuss the *Brown* case.

Warren made it clear that it was his goal to end segregation in the public schools of our nation and, of course, he ultimately prevailed. On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Warren stood and read the first opinion written by the new Chief Justice, *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Interestingly, five months later, Justice Robert Jackson died and President Eisenhower nominated his replacement from the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge John Marshall Harlan, the grandson and namesake of the famous dissenter from *Plessy*.

AND NOW THIS...

In 2010, the Supreme Court brought us *Citizens United v. FEC*, a controversial 5-4 decision that declared corporations to be persons, reversed century-old campaign finance restrictions, and enabled outside groups to spend unlimited funds on elections. Three years later, the conservative majority of the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in *Shelby County v. Holder*. And on July 1, 2021, the Court issued its 6-3 decision in *Brnovich v. DNC*, endorsing the fictional belief that voter fraud is a bigger threat to democracy than racial discrimination. As it turns out, Shakespeare was right.

The past is most certainly prologue to the present.

THE AMERICAN RACIST SYSTEM

ALVIN BROOKS

Fifty years ago, I was 37 years old. Today, I'm 88. For the past half-century, I've witnessed civil rights laws passed—often, it must be noted, with opposition. I've witnessed protests and marches for civil and human rights. I've even led a few. These and many other efforts, all to make America “a more perfect union.”

Overall, I've witnessed progress. But inequality remains. We will never reach that goal until White Americans recognize and admit, as we African Americans can't forget, that America's Structural Racist System was never intended for Blacks to have full access and equal involvement in American government and society.

The American Structural Racist System is etched in what became known as the Charters of Freedom.

First, THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. Martin Luther King, Jr. called this America's promissory note. He said: “This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned.”

As King explained, this first charter of liberty itself did nothing to dismantle the system of

racism. Blacks were not recognized even as fully human in 1776.

Second, THE CONSTITUTION. The Constitution established a federal government in 1787. To increase the political power of slave-holding states, a compromise was reached by means of the infamous “Three-Fifths Clause”—Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3. It established the counting of slaves as three-fifths of free persons.

Three, THE BILL OF RIGHTS. In 1791 the Bill of Rights was ratified. The first 10 Amendments guaranteed civil rights and liberties to individuals, such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion; they also established due process.

President Lincoln's Executive Order, the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, followed by the three Constitutional Amendments, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth, after the end of the Civil War, were designed to give equality to the freed slaves. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 and those that followed, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, were all designed to bring equality to the descendants of America's slaves. Yet, equity eludes Black Americans.

In my analysis, systemic racism is sustained by America's *economic, political, social, religious, and media* institutions.

For further evidence that America's Structural Racist System is intact and accomplishing what it was formed to do, you must take into consideration the persistent and pervasive disparities in wealth, public education,

healthcare, employment, housing, and criminal justice. The economic disinvestment in the infrastructure of the inner city and the low level of property ownership among Blacks remain a problem today.

How difficult would it be for our nation to move towards ridding itself of its Structural Racist System? Since the System, the institutions, and its subsidiaries are maintained by human beings, first and foremost, we must acknowledge that a Structural Racist System does, in fact, exist. I want to emphasize that self-examination—and institutional self-examination—are critical. There must be a national reckoning.

It will not be easy. But suppose we give it a try—right in Kansas City—and become a model for other cities and eventually the nation. It is possible.

In 1967 President Lyndon Johnson, by executive order, established the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder to investigate the riots in cities that year. The resulting Kerner Report was released in 1968. The Commission said the riots arose because of a “lack of economic opportunity, failed social service programs, housing, education, police brutality, racism, sense of powerlessness, and the white-oriented *media*.” In its criticism of the *media* it stated, “The press has too long basked in a white world...with white men’s eyes and a white perspective.”

In that context, on Sunday, December 20, 2020, reporter Mará Rose Williams and three of her colleagues did an exhaustive



“This note [The Declaration of Independence] was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

self-examination in a Special Report of *The Kansas City Star*: “The Truth in Black and White.” It traced the role of *The Star* and the influence it exerted for over 140 years: “it disenfranchised, ignored and scorned generations of Black Kansas Citizens. It re-enforced Jim Crow laws and redlining. Decade after early decade it robbed an entire community of opportunity, dignity, justice and recognition.”

THE ANTIDOTE TO AMERICA'S STRUCTURAL RACIST SYSTEM

The antidote to the poison of racism lies in an analysis of America's Structural Racist System. I am attempting to prick the conscience of those who live, own businesses, socialize, work, and shop in Kansas City, to exercise self-examination to begin the process of dismantling Kansas City's Structural Racist System as a microcosm of America's System.

The Kansas City Star made a bold move. It stepped up to the challenge, conducted a self-examination, and made a public apology for the role it played in perpetuating Kansas City's Structural Racist System for 140 years. *The Star* should be honored for its leadership—*honored and imitated!*

Let's make this a movement! Who will be the first to join The Kansas City Star? I hope and pray that the challenge will be accepted by all immediately. Then next year, Black History Month of 2022 can be a time of celebration throughout the entire community as we model for America what America should be.

I must return briefly to the Kerner Commission Report. The strongest indictment of the Report is found in these words: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." It went on to say, "What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintained it, and white society condones it."



THE KERNER COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C., 1967

"Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal."

—Kerner Report

Well, that was 1968, 52 years ago.

Now, if there's merit in my analysis of the System, if there's an honest effort to change America's Structurally Racist System, *first* all people will be honest with themselves and conduct a serious and ongoing self-examination of how they participate in, and benefit from, or are harmed by, racism and White privilege. *Then* address the question, "When, where, and how do we begin to dismantle the Structural Racist System?"

But neither of these questions will prove fruitful until we accept the fact that, continuing today, our nation is built with institutions of a Structurally Racist System. Otherwise, we'll find ourselves continuing to debate the obvious, being defensive, continuing to pass laws, organize marches, and develop slogans without basic structural changes in our institutions, and with little progress. Each of us must immediately begin this self-examination for the good of all and for all who come after us.

TO AN OUTSIDER LOOKING IN, KCPD SETS A BAD STANDARD

JAMIE LARSON, J.D.

In a relentless onslaught of tragedies, Kansas Citizens are confronted almost daily with headlines reporting new shooting homicides. As the list of grieving families grows at a scale beyond journalism's ability to capture human loss, so too does the queue of unsolved homicides handled by the Kansas City Police Department.

As a prosecutor and recent transplant to the Kansas City area from Los Angeles, I'm keenly interested in understanding my local police departments, prosecutor's offices, and city government. I'm confused and saddened by what I'm learning about the dynamics between KCPD and other parts of local government. Especially during this epidemic of gun violence, I would expect KCPD to have an "all hands on deck" approach including efforts to build community relationships, adjust enforcement strategies, and build strong partnerships with government offices and prosecutors. Instead, KCPD seems determined to erode any community credibility it has left. Since arriving in Kansas City in mid-March 2021, I've observed three key examples of KCPD's failure to build trust necessary to respond to violent crime.

First, I learned that the Kansas City government is required to fund its police department at 20% of its annual budget, but retains no control over how that budget is used. The KCPD cannot be accountable to

citizens when its budget is not controlled by the City. But if this situation wasn't bad enough, on May 28, 2021, the Police Commission initiated a lawsuit against its own Mayor and City Council for daring to have a say over the portion of its budget that goes to KCPD beyond the earmarked 20%.¹ This leads me to conclude that KCPD is disinterested in being financially accountable to its own citizens and doesn't mind squandering their tax dollars (a notion that flies in the face of conservative Republican principles of fiscal responsibility) while simultaneously failing to protect them from violent crime.

Second, in June 2021 came the further erosion of community trust in KCPD after video footage of an officer-involved shooting conflicted with the department's statements. Trust is absolutely critical to solving violent crimes like homicides, which frequently hinge on witnesses being willing to share information with police or come forward to offer testimony.

The third issue is KCPD's decision to continue submitting low-level drug possession offenses to the Jackson County DA, despite the DA's decision to not prosecute those offenses absent special circumstances. On July 2, 2021, DA Jean Peters Baker submitted a letter to the KCPD Board of Police Commissioners detailing her reasons for discontinuing the prosecution of low-level drug offenses, which were grounded in racial equity, cost analysis, and poor criminal justice outcomes.² These findings are not unique to Kansas City, but rather than join

the growing list of cities in reprioritizing law enforcement resources in response to violent crime,³ KCPD continues its blind fealty (i.e., the opposite of a data-driven approach) to outmoded and ineffective approaches to policing. Meanwhile, I imagine the DA's office sitting on stacks of homicide cases riddled with evidentiary holes too big to justify prosecution under laws requiring proof beyond a reasonable doubt—investigative holes that could possibly be filled if citizens had police department leadership they could believe in.

I realize that I come as an outsider looking in, but it's hard to imagine that a more nuanced context would put KCPD leadership in a better light given the brazen obstinacy witnessed so far. The Jackson County DA, Kansas City's Civil Rights leaders, and the Mayor and City Council have each issued clarion calls to KCPD to focus on violent crime. In response, they get a police department that goes to war with its city government, ignores its chief prosecutor, and waves off community demands for new approaches. KCPD leadership would rather blow out trick candles while the house is on fire. Meanwhile the homicide rate continues to surge.

In a better situation, the KCPD would redouble its focus on violent crime while building trust among its community partners through partnerships focused on providing care as a response to low-level crime. Dozens of law enforcement departments across the country are experimenting with models that focus on violent crime while

addressing low-level offenses more equitably and responsibly. For example, dozens of jurisdictions are already using or exploring Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) models that partner police with social service teams to divert a variety of low-level arrests into care instead of custody.⁴ While LEAD models are effective and well researched strategies, they do rely on law enforcement as the “tip of the spear” in initiating contact with low-level offenders.

Fortunately, LEAD is not the only option, and we do not have to rely on law enforcement partnerships to move forward in providing a community health response to low-level crime. Over the past five years, I've been privileged to develop a community health model called LA DOOR (Los Angeles Diversion, Outreach, and Opportunities for Recovery).⁵ LA DOOR uses a multi-disciplinary mobile social service team to deliver care in the field to people least able to access services themselves. All participants in LA DOOR have a criminal history, and most are actively engaging in low-level criminal activity correlated with addiction, mental illness, and homelessness (i.e., drug use, trespass, etc.) at the time we meet them. But the secret to LA DOOR's success is in its team members' ability to relate at a deeply personal level to the people we are trying to keep out of the justice system by providing care. The vast majority of LA DOOR team members have walked in the shoes of our participants. They have a personal story of exiting homelessness, exiting a gang, being in recovery from addiction or mental health issues, and surviving the criminal justice

system. And they are eager to give back to their community.

To be clear, the Los Angeles Police Department has multiple programs involving robust community partnerships, and our model was not an effort to sidestep our police department or minimize the serious negative impact that low-level crime has on communities. It was, however, an experiment as to whether a community health model could offer better solutions to crime driven by addiction, mental illness, and homelessness. The answer is a resounding “yes.” Through the qualitative consistent interactions provided by the LA DOOR team, we have impacted over 1,000 lives since its launch in South Los Angeles in January 2017. We’ve transitioned nearly 200 people into basic housing and have linked participants to millions of dollars worth of healthcare, mental healthcare, and addiction treatment. Participants are immediately connected to the Public Defender’s Office to review past criminal histories for opportunities for charge reduction, expungement, and returning to court on warrants.

The impacts we’ve achieved do have a price tag. LA DOOR was seeded with \$6 million in California State grant funds in order to support a robust well-paid staff, outreach vehicles, and program housing. But this is far less expensive than the \$200 million per year cost of prosecuting drug cases in the City.⁶

I wish the Kansas City government and Kansas Citizens the very best of luck in the ongoing legal battle to wrest control of their own police department away from policy leaders who don’t share their goals. I wish civil rights leaders strength and resilience as they continue the unending battle for equal justice in the worst of times. And I wish Jean Peters Baker and her prosecutors and investigators continued resolve as they do their best to seek justice without close law enforcement partnerships. And as these brave efforts continue, know that it is possible to create alternatives like LA DOOR that do not rely on policing to address low-level crime. Perhaps such an effort could be considered when City Council succeeds at returning some of its law enforcement funding to the people.

1 Link to article: <https://www.kmbc.com/article/kansas-city-missouri-board-of-police-commissioners-files-lawsuit-against-kansas-city-missouri-leaders-in-latest-battle-for-control-of-police-department-budget/36570060>

2 DA Peters Baker’s letter: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20985378-bopcletter7-21-002>

3 Cities of similar size, excluding Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City, who have reduced or ended their prosecution of drug possession offenses absent special circumstances include Baltimore (<https://www.stattorney.org/media-center/press-releases/2243-state-s-attorney-mayor-s-office-and-community-partners-announce-success-of-covid-criminal-justice-policies>), Boston (<https://www.suffolkdistrictattorney.com/rachael-rolls-policy-memo>), Contra Costa County (<https://www.contracosta.ca.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?aid=2418>), and many others.

4 See more about LEAD programs at <https://www.leadbureau.org>

5 For detailed information on LA DOOR: <https://70-million.simplecast.com/episodes/where-housing-not-jails-is-the-answer-to-homelessness>, Spectrum News 1’s coverage: <https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/homelessness/2020/07/20/la-door-seeks-out-angelenos-living-on-the-brink>, or follow up coverage: <https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/homelessness/2020/07/23/city-attorney-program-focuses-on-outreach-rather-than-prosecution>. At the time of this writing, the LA DOOR model has impacted over 1,000 lives through housing, addiction medicine, healthcare, mental healthcare, legal support, and education and employment support.

6 See article examining costs: <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/investigations/jackson-county-prosecutor-examines-use-of-resources-to-better-fight-violence-in-kansas-city>



ERIK MCGREGOR/LIGHTROCKET/GETTY IMAGES

THE CASE FOR ABOLITION IN KANSAS CITY

RYAN SORRELL

Your car breaks down, so you take it to a mechanic. The mechanic examines the vehicle to find out what is causing the problem and uses this knowledge to fix it.

The mechanic recommends that you purchase and have a replacement part installed, but it breaks down again just a few days after you get it back. You expect the mechanic to re-diagnose the vehicle, but the mechanic recommends the same replacement part, which costs twice as much this time. Though you are skeptical, you agree, just hoping your car will finally be fixed.

After the mechanic has reinstalled the new part, your car breaks down again. Instead of re-diagnosing the car, again the mechanic assures you that you need to purchase the same part, this time costing three times as much.

Would you believe the mechanic again and spend the money, or would you take your vehicle to someone else to diagnose and fix the problem?

For those involved in movement work in Kansas City, this analogy reflects our city's policing crisis.

Between the years 2012 and 2018, the Kansas City Police Department budget increased 28% while the violent crime rate rose 47% (KCPD Crime Statistics, Open Budget KC), indicating three key statistics: (1) increasing the police budget

(which indirectly drains other community resources) increases crime; (2) increasing the police budget is in no way correlated to higher levels of community safety; and (3) increasing the police budget does not reduce crime.

As a result of these statistics, reformist demands such as increased police training, expanded police-community relations, and body cameras are essentially broken car parts that do not actually decrease crime and solve issues of over-policing.

Police reforms have a long history of proving inefficient and problematic. Rick Smith, KCPD's Chief of Police, along with other police advocates, propose such reforms.

Nationally, two of the largest police reforms were implemented under the guise of "improving police-community relations" and "increasing police training." The first reform was the federal Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act, which created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. This resulted in \$10 billion being doled out over a 13-year span to police departments across the country, most often in the name of improving community relations. As a result, the act used taxpayer money toward police public relations campaigns attempting to quell public outrage after violent acts of police brutality.

The second and perhaps more well-known major police reform was the 1994 Crime Bill passed under the Clinton administration. This legislation established the Office of

Community Oriented Policing Services within the Justice Department, resulting in \$9 billion being given to police departments over a span of six years. Ultimately, this legislation focused on improving police-community relations, mistakenly assuming that bad relations between police and communities is what caused crime and police brutality to occur.

While crime rates remained relatively stagnant (with insubstantial positive or negative fluctuations), the rate of people who were sent to prison (primarily Black and brown people) increased by nearly 500% in a phenomenon known as mass incarceration. This was also largely due to the War on Drugs—as well as tough on crime laws—which persist under the leadership of Smith and Mayor Quinton Lucas, who has called for federal agents in Black and brown communities.

Blacks are incarcerated at rates disproportionate to our share of the U.S. population. According to the 2020 Equality Index, Blacks are stopped, searched, arrested, and incarcerated at rates significantly greater than Whites. The incarceration rate for Whites is less than 25% of the incarceration rate for Blacks in Missouri and Kansas. Unless we believe Americans, particularly low-income Black and brown Americans, are exponentially more morally depraved than people throughout the rest of the world, our prison/policing system is not a system of justice and safety, but a system of race, class, and gendered exploitation.

IF POLICE REFORMS ARE NOT THE ANSWER, WHAT IS?

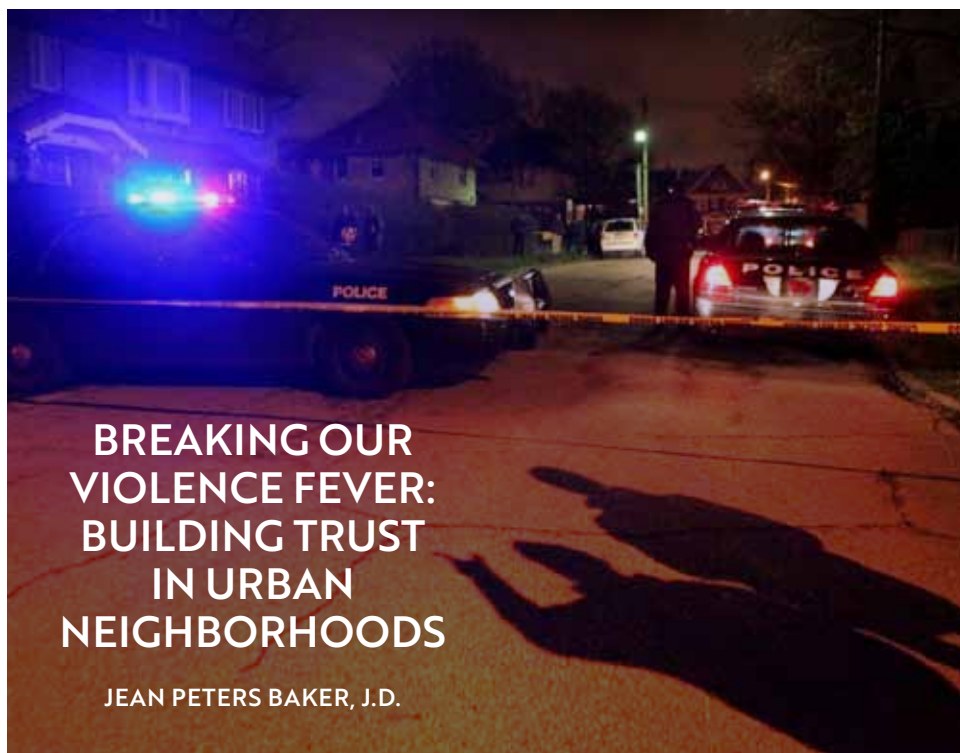
Abolition is the only answer for achieving transformative and real justice in a system of over-policing. According to Critical Resistance (a member-led and member-run grassroots movement to challenge the use of punishment to “cure” complicated social problems), abolition is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment. Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal. Abolitionists believe that the overspending in police reforms should instead go to affordable housing, education, mental health, and other life-affirming services and, in turn, the need for policing and surveillance would be made obsolete.

Abolitionists believe mental health and education are all issues of public safety and advocate for separating policing from public safety. There is no reason that someone employed to issue a parking ticket needs a lethal weapon, or that an officer should interact with people in a mental health crisis instead of a mental health professional.

Far more people die every year from drug overdoses, houselessness, food insecurity, and other resource-related problems than those who are killed by intercommunal violence. If public safety is the concern, the solution should be to provide people with resources. In fact, by funding the police, we are defunding social services and indirectly killing people like Scott Eicke, a local unhoused man who froze to death on January 1 of this year.

Abolition recognizes that crime is both a racial and gendered political category and is separate from harm. Smoking marijuana is a crime in most states, but it does not cause harm, while for many years, killing a Black person caused massive harm but was not a crime. We know that “criminal” is visualized as Black in the political imagery and is separate from prisoner. Lastly, we believe reform, meaning simply “change,” is different than reformist, meaning a change that reinforces the existing system.

Ultimately, abolition is about presence, not absence. It is not about indiscriminately releasing folks from jails and prisons tomorrow, but building a world where police, jails, and prisons are no longer necessary.



BREAKING OUR VIOLENCE FEVER: BUILDING TRUST IN URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

JEAN PETERS BAKER, J.D.

Kansas City is in crisis. We are experiencing a fever of violence. Last year marked the highest rate of violence ever recorded in our city. That includes the previous highest records in the 1990s.¹ Our city's historic high levels of violence are the outgrowth of another disturbing trend in our most vulnerable communities—a deepening mistrust of the system. This erosion of trust between the criminal justice system (that by design is to keep people safe) and those who most often need that system is worsening. Police officers are the first representatives in this system. Other players in the system must not be overlooked, like prosecutors, judges, and juries, but the vast majority of policy-making is directed by police commanders.

This article addresses ways to increase perceived and actual fairness in the system, hence, making the criminal justice system a source of safety, justice, and a pathway to peace in all communities.

Kansas Citians, like others across America, have questioned the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in their individual communities. Kansas Citians have also rightly demanded a greater voice in how they are policed. Despite demands for a voice in their police department and a change in police leadership, change has not come. The city is at a stalemate, and a deafening silence hangs over the city. Police leaders have few answers, yet place culpability for the violence squarely on our most vulnerable and most harmed

communities. While Kansas City hangs in the balance, violence continues unabated, but worse, it is allowed to take greater root while distrust grows deeper and wider.

Where, when, how, and how much a police department enforces is determined by police command and requires a trusting relationship with the community to effectively carry out those plans. Which neighborhoods get more enforcement and which get less is a discretionary decision made from a chief's office. All criminal justice players are deeply impacted by those decisions, but vulnerable urban neighborhoods are acutely affected. This article addresses those communities, rather than neighborhoods that are more affluent and do not experience such high rates of violence.

While I am an optimist about Kansas City's future, I am also a realist. I know violence prevention is possible because I witnessed it in Kansas City.² The key ingredient to breaking our violence fever is building trust. If trust exists, then the system would be deemed fair, competent, and capable of delivering justice. If the system is deemed fair, then those who need this system will rely on it, rather than on their own measures, and a safer community will result. But first, criminal justice actors must recognize that the problem is worsening.

For those persons living in those vulnerable, poorest urban neighborhoods, violence impacts everything: one's health, opportunities, ability to work, achieve, and excel. As one author put it, "If you are

not safe, nothing else matters."³ But law enforcement focus, almost myopically, on what they believe is the problem, and that is the lack of cooperation with police to solve crime. It is easy to view a lack of cooperation, especially from a White perspective, as a seemingly incomprehensible attitude and the simple answer for crime prevention. This is not entirely wrong. A lack of cooperation makes solving crime harder, and unsolved violence begets more violence. However, lack of cooperation is merely a symptom of the much deeper problem.

Placing a myopic focus on the community's reluctance to assist with solving crime is similar to a doctor who focuses on a patient's difficulty breathing instead of the underlying disease, the patient's asthma. Focusing on the condition causing the problem would be infinitely more effective to alleviate the patient's breathing concerns. Now imagine the doctor was angry with the patient and blamed the patient and the patient's community for this symptom while offering no solutions for the disease. Most patients would find a new doctor. (Here, the community cannot select a different police department.) Like the angry doctor, the police focus on the symptom, rather than the disease, and the community's trust in them is shredded. Until police begin to look deeply at their own inability to address the real disease, this fever of violence will not break. Additional lives are lost and altered by trauma while the focus remains on the breathing.

Police have responded to violence by more heavily enforcing in those urban communities that do not hold the norm of trusting police; those also are the areas where most violence occurs. Police focus heavily there on low-level crimes, while ignoring them in more affluent neighborhoods. Traffic violations, jaywalking, loitering become the focus.⁴ The enforcement of low-level crime shows the system can work with an astonishingly high efficiency in communities that are wracked by violence and simultaneously, are plagued by high poverty, low property values, and a multitude of other real disadvantages.

But focusing on low-level crime in high violence areas may have the opposite of the intended effect, leading to higher rates of violence. In communities reasonably lacking trust relationships, the link between enforcement of low-level crimes, like failing to fully stop at a stop sign, has a reverberating effect because residents understand that not all communities are subject to this type of enforcement. These residents are ticketed for small offenses, like walking in the street where a sidewalk is provided, riding a bike without proper lighting, or charging an addict with a small quantity of drugs, which are largely or totally ignored in other neighborhoods. And those who are frequent users of the criminal justice system, generally those who are poor and Black or brown, are increasingly vulnerable to violence. Put simply, these communities experience all of

the downsides of policing and too few of its benefits.

Enforcing low-level, quality of life crime in an unequal manner has a price. It requires police officers' time, crime labs, jails, prosecutors, public defenders, courts, and probation officers to enforce, but there are other costs. Fewer officers are available on each shift. When they are directed to heavily enforce infractions in harmed communities, these officers are not gathering intelligence or helping resolve disputes that will later lead to violence. These officers are unwittingly undermining the criminal justice system further when violence eventually strikes.⁵

Predictably, violence will strike in the same areas where residents are cited for infractions. People living in these neighborhoods already know that crime is not enforced equally. They see friends murdered, yet no one is arrested.⁶ They see violence on a regular basis, and it is too rarely solved. When their car is stolen or their home is burglarized, the clearance rate is roughly 2 to 3%. That's not a typo: about 97% of these important crimes go unsolved in Kansas City.⁷ Conversely, they have friends who are charged with a state level felony for possession of two pills without a prescription.⁸ Because *this* community understands that crime is not enforced equally and that violence is rarely solved in *their* neighborhoods, they don't see the criminal justice system as fair, legitimate, and, most importantly, as an entity that can solve problems and protect them. That is a

devastating outcome. This is not a perception problem; it is very real in Kansas City.

Law enforcement must be the source for everyone's safety and must be counted on to deliver justice in all communities. If the justice system is viewed as a system that doesn't work for "us" or is too punitive on the poor or disadvantaged or is applied unevenly, or heavily based on race, then it will be viewed as without legitimacy. A system that is viewed as without legitimacy will not be a system that is utilized. Period.

There are solutions. We can break this cycle of violence if we adhere to some basic principles. The following suggestions are not a comprehensive listing of solutions or in order of importance; however, these concepts are critical to change.

- Recognize that distrust is merely a symptom and is deeply rooted from awful historical and uniquely American truths from slave patrols, to failures to prosecute lynchings, to enforcement of Jim Crow laws, to the proliferation of Black people in American jails and prisons, but also from current failures. The police are not viewed as capable of solving violence. That position is clearly supported by evidence. Among all victims, less than 20% of nonfatal shootings are solved, and homicides are solved just above 50% in Kansas City. The numbers drop even further for victims who are of persons of color.
- The myth that minorities are anti-law enforcement should be debunked.
- Wanting a fair criminal justice system that treats a person of color on an equal footing doesn't equate to being anti-police. Statistically, minorities need the protection and competence of the system more often because they are victimized at much higher rates than their White counterparts. They simply need this system to work for them and for their neighborhoods.
- Communities that are wracked by violence and poverty deserve fairness by all actors in the criminal justice system. When low-level crimes are enforced—that enforcement strategy must be with an equal application in all neighborhoods. If police cannot ticket residents in Brookside for jaywalking without sparking outrage, then they can't do it in other Kansas City neighborhoods. Regarding fairness, law enforcement leaders must speak with a voice promoting fairness specifically for our most harmed communities. Moreover, fairness must be reassessed for residents who are poor or unemployed, those with a past criminal history, and most certainly, for people of color. Finally, all criminal justice partners must believe that residents living in vulnerable communities deserve protection, not more violence.
- The killing and excessive force used against Black and brown people at the hands of police must be confronted from police leadership, not just from the community. The data is clear: Black

males in Kansas City stand a four times greater risk of being shot by police than any other demographic. Until there is some proactive movement regarding this reality by police leadership, trust will not be built.

- Policing strategies should consistently focus on the individual with proven harms exacted on the community. Strategic enforcement actions directed at the person demonstrated to be connected to violence or one who poses a substantial risk to the community, will lead to a view of police as more just and competent. In turn, overall legitimacy will improve.
- All criminal justice partners should be data-driven, and policies should

be shaped by data that is exhibited in a transparent manner. Police and prosecutors should demonstrate their willingness to change long-standing practices that are proven to cause further harm.

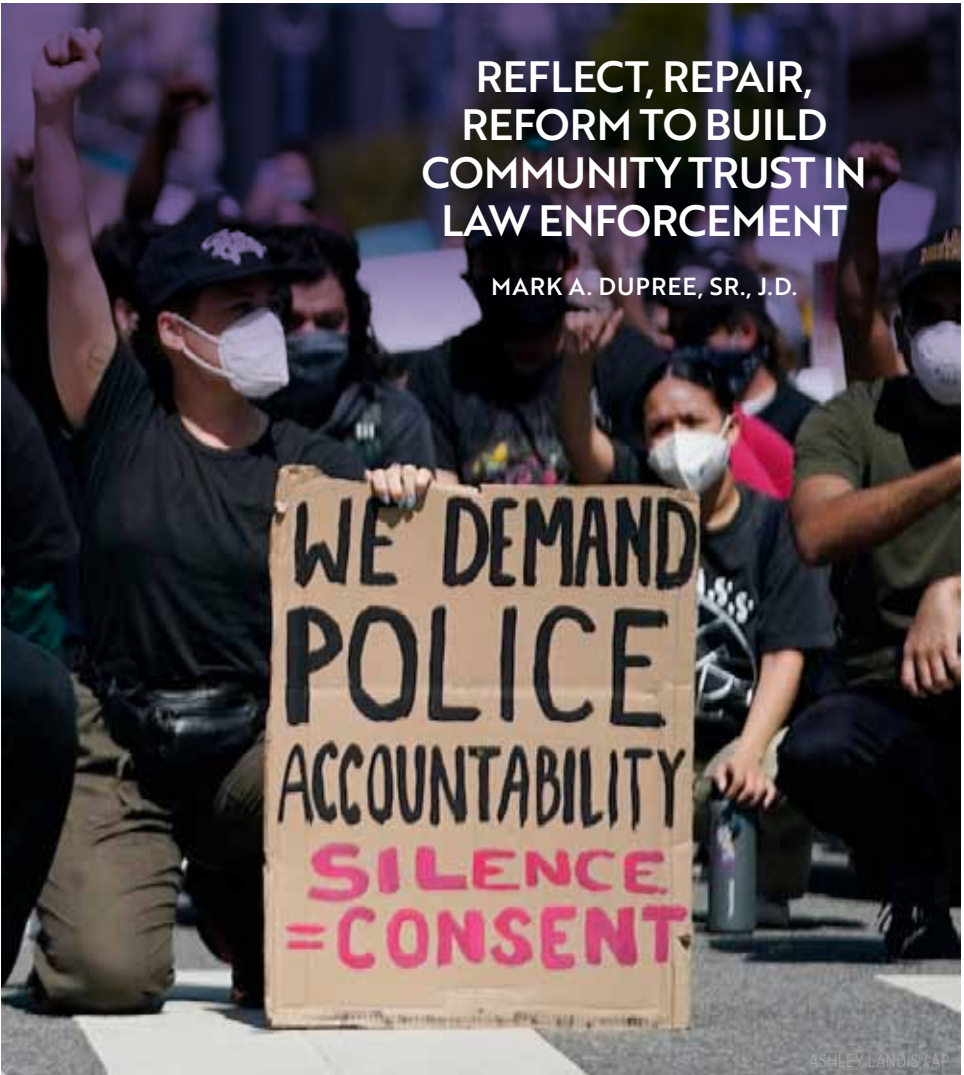
- Each officer should be trained to be a community interaction officer. And officers who fail to interact with the community in a fair manner should be held accountable by their leadership.
- Big picture enforcement strategies should be thoughtful and articulated to the public, not kept in secret.

Ultimately, being truly fair is how we begin to build trust. Only with trust will this violence fever break.

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- 1 2020 homicide rates resulted in 179 victims in Kansas City, but that number did not include killings by law enforcement; in 1993 there were 153 homicide victims—that year police killings were also included. Likewise, in 1970, homicide rates were recorded at 134, also including police killings. These numbers were pulled from KCPD's bluesheet, Daily Homicide Analysis.
 - 2 <https://www.kmbc.com/article/kansas-city-homicide-rate-in-2014-poised-for-sharp-drop/3686001#> (implementation of a highly collaborative effort utilizing focused deterrence methods drops KC's homicide rate).
 - 3 *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence*, by Gary A. Haugen and Victor Boutros. Published February 4, 2014, by Oxford University Press, USA.
 - 4 Other examples of low level, quality of life offenses include jaywalking, loitering, and traffic infractions, but not crimes such as burglary and stolen autos.
 - 5 This article does not address the prolific problem of law enforcement shootings of Black or brown people or the historical context for this important issue. Police shootings are not meant to be overlooked simply because this article is limited in scope. It must be noted that per the policescorecard.org, Black men are shot and killed by the KCPD at a rate that is **4.3 times higher** than white men. The prevailing view that officers must kill or be killed is imparted from an officer's first day in Academy. Placing a greater focus on the warrior rather than the guardian encourages a misguided belief that minority males are predatory, leading to higher rates of violence by officers.
 - 6 <https://policescorecard.org/> Homicide rates from 2013–2019 were recorded at 854 total homicides, with 399 solved, resulting in a KCPD solve rate of 53%.
 - 7 <https://www.kcpd.org/media/3419/2020annual.pdf> For the last five years, only two of every 10 violent crimes in Kansas City are cleared; only one of 10 crimes, overall, is cleared. Property crimes fares poorly in police solve rates.
 - 8 <https://policescorecard.org/> demonstrates this problem with Arrest rates for Low Level Offenses at 51% of all arrests, Drug Possession arrest at 9%, and Violent Crime arrest at 7%.

REFLECT, REPAIR, REFORM TO BUILD COMMUNITY TRUST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

MARK A. DUPREE, SR., J.D.



ASHLEY LANDIS ZAP

The criminal justice system has come a long way, but we have much farther to go. Discriminatory laws have historically, unjustifiably, and disproportionately affected Black people and people of color. As the first Black elected District Attorney in the State of Kansas, I understand firsthand how laws can unjustly impact communities. In the past, these practices included but were not limited to Black Codes, vagrancy

laws, and convict leasing. Though these specific practices are no longer utilized, discriminatory practices are still seen in the system. The bone-chilling reality is the law has been and is used as a weapon to oppress people of color. We must use our voice, position, and resources to improve society.

We have the power to impact our immediate surroundings and beyond. But



first, we must recognize this power. This influence is felt even more when we ask ourselves important questions, such as, “How are we advancing the goal of equity and justice for all?”

I took the goal of equity and justice for all with me when I was elected as the Wyandotte County District Attorney. When I took office in 2017, I was made aware there was a noose being passed around the office. Apparently, whenever a prosecuting attorney got a “hung jury,” a noose was placed in that attorney’s office. We immediately ceased this decades-long practice as culturally incompetent and inappropriate. To treat a noose as a joke makes light of the over 5,000 African Americans murdered with a noose in this country. I share this anecdote to emphasize a larger point: There must be systemic change, but it starts with changing who we have in power and changing the status quo mindset.

The American Bar Association labels prosecutors as “Ministers of Justice,” while the U.S. Supreme Court states, “the guilty shall not escape, nor the innocent suffer” (*Berger v. U.S.*, 295 U.S. 78, 88 [1935]). We take this mandate seriously; it is an order to administer justice fairly, justly, and vigorously. Sadly, that has not always been the case, and the ongoing disproportionate impact shows it. Studies have found that people of color are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than White people. According to a 2018

“the guilty shall not escape,
nor the innocent suffer”

study by Pew, one in 23 black adults in the United States are on parole or probation, versus one in 81 White adults.¹ The criminal justice system is fundamentally flawed. Those flaws have caused harmful inequities which have fueled generational trauma to families, decimated entire communities, and disproportionately impacted poor folks, those suffering with mental health diagnoses, and communities of color. Our prisons and county jails across the state and country are full of what I have coined the three B’s: “Black, brown, and broke folks” of all backgrounds and walks of life.

The criminal justice system, like many other systems, needs to first accept these facts as truth in order for real reform to occur. To have meaningful reform, we must focus our attention on the two other R’s—reflect and repair. Reflecting on the fact that the system has caused harm to so many and then maybe we can repair the trust with the people that the system serves. Maybe then our communities will start trusting and working with and within the system to create change.

The Court further states, “but, while he may strike hard blows, he is not at liberty to strike foul ones. It is as much his duty to refrain from improper methods calculated to produce a wrongful conviction as it is to use every legitimate means to bring about a just one” (*Berger v. U.S.*, 295 U.S. 78, 88 [1935]).

“but, while he may strike hard blows, he is not at liberty to strike foul ones. It is as much his duty to refrain from improper methods calculated to produce a wrongful conviction as it is to use every legitimate means to bring about a just one”

Thus, we find in the same mandate pursuing and convicting the correct person is of the utmost importance to the integrity of our county and country.

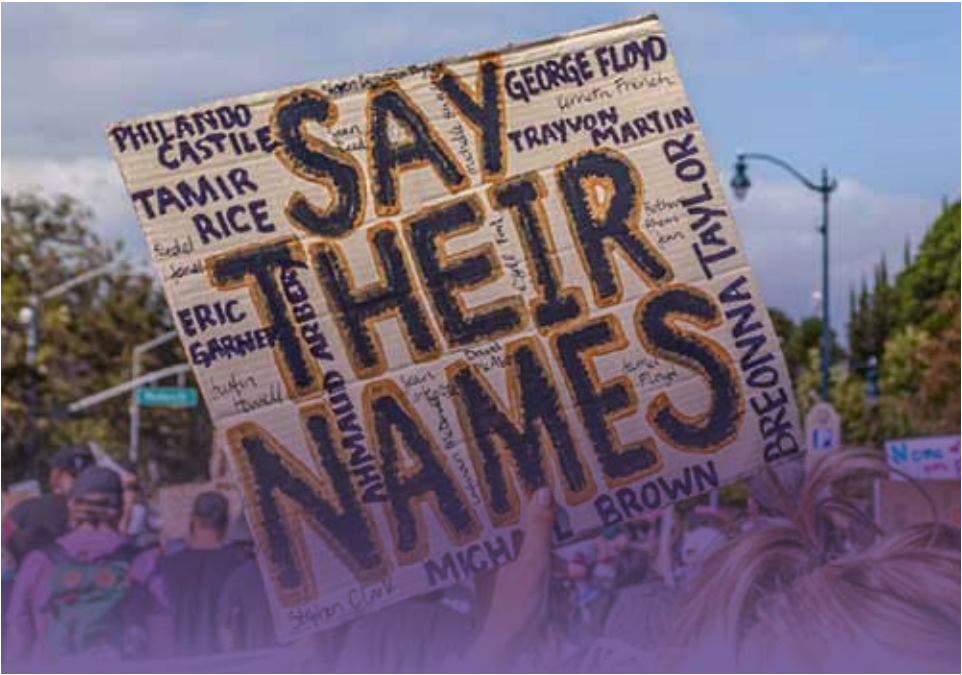
I used my position as Wyandotte County District Attorney to propose the creation of a Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU). What happened next was a mixed reaction of attacks from those in power who did not want a light shed in dark places; an outpouring of support from Wyandotte County residents; and ultimately, the passage of funding by Wyandotte County Commissioners. This forward-thinking unit is the first ever in the state of Kansas. We believe every conviction that comes out of any District Attorney’s office must hold integrity, both now and in the decades to come. But please understand—we had to fight to make the CIU a reality.

The justice system has been around long enough for us to begin learning from its

history. If nothing else, we have learned that mistakes will be made in any system that involves humans. In our role as “Ministers of Justice,” we as prosecutors have a unique ethical obligation to seek justice in every case, including past cases where injustices and mistakes may have occurred. This is why the CIU was created, and why we created an Expungement Day Resource Fair and a youth mentoring program, re-engaged with the Drug Court, and collaborated with the District Court to create a Behavioral Health Court and Veteran’s Court.

Too many governmental bodies, agencies, and organizations leave the community out of the process. We are making the community the solution while building community trust. We created a Community Liaison Board and a Faith-Based Liaison Board, both consisting of members drawn from across the county.

All of us have work to do. We can all use our influence to fight for progress. Sometimes it’s as simple as understanding who is running for elected office and committing to voting in every single election. Sometimes it is more complicated and involves you deciding to run for elected office. I hope we remember the deeply rooted injustices and understand that although much progress has been made, there is more work to do. This will require everyone fighting for change in whatever capacity they can.



21 PILLARS FOR REDEFINING PUBLIC SAFETY AND RESTORING COMMUNITY TRUST

JERIKA L. RICHARDSON, J.D.

The killings of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Daniel Prude, and more had a catalyzing effect on the nation and the world in 2020. Their legacies sparked the social justice uprising of a generation. We expressed our demands for justice through protests and rallies in the street, through grassroots organizing, and through virtual and social media teach-ins. We all took part in a long-overdue national discussion about systemic racism and police violence—from the streets to corporate boardrooms to the

halls of law and justice. Our conversations revealed justice requires equity, and equity requires accountability. The 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust addresses each of those needs.

Policing in America is, and has always been, a primary entry point to the criminal justice system, particularly for Black men and people of color. The system of old has clear links to slavery, the Black Codes, and Jim Crow laws. The system is now represented by police brutality and mass incarceration. Policing in America has been synonymous with public safety only for some in this country. Now is the time to support the bold notion that all people should feel safe in their homes and communities, and that the public safety system should reflect the needs of all.

For too long communities around the nation, particularly Black communities, have had their lives, safety, and freedom threatened by discriminatory and violent policing tactics, followed by a punitive criminal-legal system. Violent divisive practices are permitted in many police departments. Furthermore, we have very little data on the amount of harm caused by police; instead we rely on the chance that officers have functioning body-worn cameras. When incidents do occur, we consistently learn of red flags after the fact—an officer was previously terminated from another department, this is not their first questionable use of lethal force, or they have a clear bias against Black and brown people. Eventually, officers who unnecessarily severely injure or kill often escape accountability, and the nation is left grappling with our system. We find no redress in the courts; families and communities are left grieving; and the officer in question remains a police officer. This system must be re-envisioned.

The National Urban League’s 21 Pillars Toolkit serves as a resource for organizers and community leaders on the local, state, and national levels to elevate our movement of protest to policymaking. We believe that by providing resources and model legislation and policies, and by elevating the solutions already underway, we can support community leaders, activists, and elected officials in their efforts to redefine public safety and restore community trust.

The 21 Pillars are intended to serve as a policy menu where you identify what would best work in your community. Each reform included is not ideal for each community, and some communities have already addressed some of the reforms. Community discussion and activation is critical here. We suggest you review the 21 Pillars and prioritize what would best serve your state or community and devise your plan of action accordingly.

The 21 Pillars are organized into five themes:

1. Collaborate with Communities to Build a Restorative System
2. Accountability
3. Change Divisive Police Policies
4. Require Transparency, Reporting and Data Collection
5. Improve Hiring Standards & Training

For each theme, the Toolkit identifies relevant examples of state and local action taking place. The final section of the Toolkit includes sample legislation and police policies from around the country that can be helpful in your location. The current system of policing is working as designed, and it is working against us. It must be transformed and redefined. We believe this Toolkit will prove valuable as you push for transformational change in your community.

To view or download the full text of the 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust, visit the National Urban League website at www.nul.org/index.php/program/police-reform.



ETHICAL SOCIETY OF POLICE: A LAW ENFORCEMENT BEST PRACTICE

SHANETTE HALL

The Ethical Society of Police (ESOP) was founded in 1972 by African-American police officers in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department with the goal of addressing race-based discrimination within the police department and improving police and community relations.

During this time there was an extreme push for more African-American police officers in the department because of numerous complaints from the NAACP. In response to the calls, the department agreed to hire more African Americans; however, this did not come without a fight. Officers faced discrimination from the department in becoming employed, receiving specialized

assignments, and achieving promotion. African-American officers began to seek comfort with each other to determine what could be done about the issues they faced at SLMPD. They began to organize and formally address the discrimination in SLMPD and how the structures internally affected minority communities in St. Louis. After trying times, ESOP became an official association in 1972, with Officer James Buchanan (who began his career with SLMPD in 1965 and is now retired) named as the first president.

As the ESOP progressed throughout the years, they became known for their commitment to the community. ESOP championed fair treatment for all citizens and pushed the police department to be more reflective of the community they served. Not only did ESOP call for more diversity in the police department, they also developed ways for it to happen. ESOP initiated the first-ever Pre-Academy program for St. Louis area residents and provided the training and knowledge necessary for those who sought a career in law enforcement. This effort was important because the patterns and practices used to determine who would gain employment were having an adverse impact on minorities who desired a career in law enforcement. The Pre-Academy focused on minimizing those impacts and teaching content that was often left out of typical police academy settings. This content included intense instruction on ethics, integrity, and cultural competency. Through its dedication to the Pre-Academy Program, ESOP provided several minorities

with a pathway into employment with many St. Louis area police departments.

While ESOP was being recognized in St. Louis, they also became known to the entire country, through the efforts of former President Sergeant Heather Taylor. Her voice carried throughout the country as she said things rarely heard from law enforcement. Sergeant Taylor was not afraid to admit the profession had significant flaws, many of which existed because of the profession's inability to adequately address its racist past and present. Sergeant Taylor made it known where ESOP stood when she told the world that former SLMPD Officer Jason Stockley deserved to be convicted for the murder of Anthony Lamar Smith. This stance took many by surprise, because it was not common for police organizations to publicly call for convictions of police officers. However, this is what made ESOP different than most. It was and will always be about right and wrong. It owes a duty to the public to ensure those who can take away life and liberty be held accountable when they abuse their authority.

In 2018, ESOP expanded into the St. Louis County Police Department and other municipalities in the County by forming another chapter to continue carrying out their mission and dedication to the public. Because of ESOP's integrity and determination, that expansion did not come without a fight. The organization

was subjected to many stalling tactics from former St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar and St. Louis County Executive Dr. Sam Page. The almost two-year fight of trying to be recognized within a predominately White space is symbolic of the battle African Americans have had to deal with throughout history. Prevailing over obstacles is part of our history. ESOP in St. Louis County was officially recognized as an association by St. Louis County in June 2020.

While ESOP is not an official union, they are heavily involved in policy change within the department. The organization is available to both civilian and commissioned personnel in St. Louis area police departments. ESOP is one of the few minority police organizations that offer legal representation to all of its members. The organization is also one of the few to officially publish a comprehensive report detailing the thriving oppressive structures in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

ESOP will continue to remain vigilant in its efforts to speak up for the voiceless, provide resources to the community, and promote ethical policing for our area under the leadership of current president, Sergeant Donnell Walters of SLMPD. Their voice will not only serve as a beacon of hope in reimagining a more equitable law enforcement approach, but also as a guide for what proper accountability means for all those in service-driven professions.

**CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD**

**IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?**



SOCIAL JUSTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The path toward social justice is obstructed by disturbing patterns of misconduct, discrimination, and unconstitutional patterns and practices of violent policing targeting communities of color by the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD). Social

Justice will continue to be an elusive goal if measures are not taken to address:

- the high rate of excessive and deadly force incidents against Black and Latinx Kansas Citians;
- compelling evidence of constitutional violations, discriminatory patterns, and practices in policing, hiring and promotions, and handling of community complaints; and
- lack of accountability or an opportunity for redress because KCPD is governed by a state agency—not the citizens of Kansas City, Missouri, whose tax dollars fund the department.

The Urban League of Greater Kansas City's Police Accountability Task Force, which is comprised of representatives from MORE², Missouri Jobs with Justice, Ad Hoc Group Against Crime, Jewish Community Relations Bureau/American Jewish Committee KC, Presbyterian Urban and Immigrant Ministry Network of Heartland Presbytery, Black Leaders Advancing Quality Urban Education (BLAQUE), Jackson County Bar Association, Black Rainbow, NAACP and SCLC-GKC, and the Urban Council (National Black United Front-KC, NAACP-KC, SCLC-GKC, Urban League and Urban Summit) recommend:

- 1. The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) investigate the unconstitutional patterns and practices of violent policing targeting communities of color** by the KCPD pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 and an assessment of KCPD practices under the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, as well as the Safe Streets Act of 1968, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- 2. Concerted and aggressive measures are put in place to secure local control of the Kansas City Police Department.** These measures should include forming a steering committee to develop strategies, tactics, and resources required to secure local control through a statewide ballot initiative.

KCPD is incompetent and ineffective, and it lacks community trust. For the past five years, only two of every 10 violent crimes in Kansas City have been cleared; only one of 10 crimes

overall has been cleared. This high rate of failure is problematic. Victims and witnesses have no confidence that justice will be served in their crimes. Consequently, they do not cooperate, often out of concern about their safety, and take matters into their own hands, fueling a cycle of violence spawned by a lack of trust in the law enforcement system.

In July 2021, Police Scorecard,¹ which evaluates police departments based on quantitative data on arrests, use of force, accountability, and other policing issues, ranked KCPD 496 out of 500 of the largest law enforcement agencies in the country. Departments with higher scores use less force, make few arrests for low level offenses, solve murder cases more often, hold officers more accountable, and spend less on policing overall.

KCPD officers used deadly force more than 98% of similar sized districts, killing 36 people between 2012 and 2020. A Black person was 4.3 times more likely to be killed by police than a White person in Kansas City from 2013 to 2020. Only 3% of 1,059 citizen complaints against officers were substantiated over a three-year period commencing 2016. Of 132 use-of-force complaints, 0% were ruled in favor of civilians.

There is no silver bullet solution to these problems. **Robust strategies and tactics must be employed to redress these injustices, redefine public safety, and restore community trust in the justice system.** The National Urban League's 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust Toolkit² provides a comprehensive framework for policy design, legislative action, and programs to achieve transformational change in our community. The Urban League of Greater Kansas City will employ the 21 Pillars Toolkit as a guide for advancing policies and practices that align with the five key themes of the 21 Pillars as follows:

1. **Collaborating with communities to build a restorative system**
2. **Demanding accountability**
3. **Changing divisive policing practices**
4. **Requiring transparency, reporting, and data collection**
5. **Improving hiring standards and training**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Kansas City, Missouri City Council:
 - a. **Pass an ordinance during the 2022–2023 budget cycle to allocate no more than the state mandated 20% of the City's general operating fund to the KCPD.**
 - b. **Invest in comprehensive crisis response programs that are responsive to overlapping public health and safety concerns.**

-
- i. Pass an ordinance directing the City Manager to work with education, healthcare, social services, housing and community development, and faith- and community-based organizations to create a plan and budget to invest \$42 million in housing, employment, health and mental healthcare, youth development, food insecurity, and other tangible crime and violence reduction initiatives.
 - c. Convene city-wide community outreach and input sessions to educate Kansas Citizens on local control of KCPD and determine a pathway to gaining local oversight and control of the KCPD.
2. Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners:
- a. Prohibit profiling based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or immigration status.
 - i. Require the development of written bias-free policing policies with community input that provide guidance on bias-free policing, implicit bias, cultural competency, and procedural justice.
 - ii. Create an independent all-civilian community-based review board that is empowered to receive, investigate, and resolve all civil complaints of police misconduct. Ensure that the board has adequate funding, subpoena, administrative, and prosecutorial powers that will enable it to investigate complaints, advise on needed policy changes, and serve as the final determination on officer discipline thoroughly and independently.³
 - b. End the broken windows model of policing⁴ and implement community policing model.
 - i. Shift police time and public resources from low-level offenses including drug possession, public intoxication, loitering, jaywalking, disorderly conduct, and sex work to violent crime and homicides.
 - ii. Establish evaluation metrics for officers to focus ratings on community engagement, community feedback, and social service referral, in addition to safety and case resolution metrics.
 - iii. Require crisis intervention and de-escalation training for all officers, first responders, and public-facing staff.

1 <https://policescorecard.org/>

2 <https://nul.org/index.php/program/police-reform>

3 National Urban League, 21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust Toolkit.

4 Broken Windows. *The Atlantic*, 1982. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling.

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THE PATH
FORWARD

IS EQUITY ENOUGH?

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CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

FOREWORD

THE BATTLE FOR THE BALLOT

REV. DR. VERNON PERCY HOWARD, JR.

American democracy was born from the womb of resistance and ultimate armed rebellion against British tyranny, which denied colonialists here on native soil representation within the governing parliament of Great Britain. The thirteen American colonies began mobilizing their energies and resistance to such lack of enfranchisement amid taxation as early as 1764, culminating with the watershed April 1775 American Revolution and the July 4, 1776, Declaration of Independence. The clear political contradiction, and of course, the ashamed moral hypocrisy in this historic record of our nation, is that since 1619 those same American colonialists, all of them White and of European origin, and their forbears, had violently birthed and advanced the system of chattel slavery, forcing millions of Africans and Black Americans who were void of representation into a “new” American establishment of justice in which those of a darker hue held no equal human or citizenship status and no right to vote by law.

Historian Vincent Harding (*There is a River*, 1981) records that the American Colonialists and their strange bedfellows from other parts of Europe came in ships titled *Brotherhood*, *John the Baptist*, *Justice and Integrity*, *Gift of God*, and *Liberty* and, of course, the penultimate ship named *Jesus*, which sailed from Amsterdam, Lisbon, Nantes, LaRochelle, Bristol, London, Newport, and Boston. So significant was Boston because it was the seat of American colonial passion and fervor and martyrdom and armed rebellion against such denial of enfranchisement that American colonialists refused to accept for themselves at the hands of Great Britain. Those American colonialists from Boston were integral in leading that 1775 armed uprising for their rights, to which they attached the most profound and powerful political document in the history of modern nations—the American Constitution.

That Constitution became the ratified political, social, and moral vision for this America we live in today. The document’s medley of paradox, irony, and glaring injustice is heart-wrenching for those of us who are its fatal victims and still struggle with all our might to be among its rightful beneficiaries. It is a medley composed of blue notes, hymns of mourning, filled with lyrics of disdain and exclusion. No Africans or American-born Blacks are recorded as being part of the five-month Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia in 1787, which concretized the Constitution as this nation’s guiding light, even though Blacks are verified as having fought and died in the American Revolution that freed the nation from British tyranny. The Constitution itself rather, in its final draft as documented in Article 1, Section 2, number 3, designated Blacks as only three-fifths of a person, codifying Black dehumanization and thus functioning to legalize disenfranchisement. In fact, Article 4, Section 2, number 3, also known as the Fugitive Slave

Clause, ensured that both the spirit and practice of slavery and disenfranchisement remained core to America's values. What was supposed to be a guarantor of freedom for the nation was a harbinger of captivity and injustice for Blacks.

It was not until 1865, some two and half centuries after Black presence in America, via the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, that slavery was outlawed. Three years later, in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was written to address equal rights, legal protections, and civil rights for those freed from slavery after the Civil War. Two years after this, in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution guaranteed the right to vote could not be denied based upon race or color or previous status of being enslaved. And though these Amendments were clear on paper, they were not convincing, nor were they convicting within the hearts and minds of the American psyche across the broad spectrum of American culture. This was true particularly within the states comprising the original Colonialist ethic, expressed most poignantly and fiercely through the institution and culture of the Confederacy, that band of states that seceded from the United States of America, waged war against the Union, and whose proponents were willing to die for the maintenance of a social, political, and economic system that affirmed Black dehumanization and rejected the Black franchise via the vote. In fact, what was to ensue was a whole new era of both overt and covert attempts to block Black participation at the ballot and the consequent power it yields within this most important bedrock of democracy.

The post-slavery periods of Reconstruction and Jim Crow extending into the early and mid-20th century brought with them an equally entrenched racism that functioned differently than slavery and legal disenfranchisement via the Constitution but continued to hinder the full and free access of Blacks to the ballot. Though the Constitution extended to Blacks guarantees of full citizenship, tactics were employed by many Southern states bolstered by alignments among White bureaucrats, legislators, government officials, civic leaders, and cultural leaders of White supremacy and hate who still vehemently resisted and opposed the Black franchise. The most glaring signal and overt court decision giving vent to what was to be yet another one hundred years of struggle for the Black franchise was the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision that codified, defined, and branded American society as a racially segregated nation. This racist and recalcitrant ruling against Black dignity sanctioned the nation as "separate but equal." The language of the ruling legalized what came to be the Jim Crow era of segregation in America as it dictated "equal but separate accommodations for the White and colored races." This fueled and emboldened the continuance of racism in the Southern part of the United States and beyond and was an additional historic factor having grave implications for the hope of the Black franchise. America has been a nation faced with the unreconcilable task of espousing and enforcing its principles and laws of voting rights for all regardless of race while also banning or separating a group within public settings because of its race.

Into the 20th century Blacks faced the continuation of racist tactics that sought to deny them full rights and citizenship based upon race. These tactics included efforts to hinder full and free access to the ballot. Some hindrances were presented by passing unjust laws or policies within both state and local jurisdictions. Other tactics were hostile and even violent and have included intimidation of Blacks and others sympathetic to their cause. Fred Powell (*The Civil Rights Movement and the People who Made It*, 1991) documents the use of the poll tax, which levied a fee for access to the ballot, rendering Blacks, most of whom already suffered from disparities in income and wealth, disadvantaged and thus left with unequal access. In addition, Powell cites the removal of thousands of Black names in many voting registrars' records in places across the Southern states, negatively impacting the Black franchise. Literacy tests, impromptu questions on civic duty, and other obscure and biased queries regarding matters even most Whites could not answer, were strategies designed to hamper Black political power at the ballot and resist participation in the democracy. Instances of outright physical threat and harm toward Blacks discouraged casting of their ballot.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the most significant civil and human rights leader in the history of the United States, in his 1956 speech, *Facing the Challenge of a New Age*, termed these state and localized impediments against the Black franchise "interposition and nullification" and viewed them as a moral crisis within the soul of America and a betrayal of the principles and norms of democracy. Dr. King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), along with the venerable National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), side by side with the courageous and matchless work of National Urban League and the voting advocacy initiatives of groups like Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), waged tenacious political battles and organizing campaigns to advance the Black franchise. Civil Rights leaders Fannie Lou Hamer, Dorothy Height, Ella Baker, and Ida Wells were integral to the strategic mobilization of demonstrations and protests designed to break the chains of Black disenfranchisement. They played indispensable roles in the movement toward the battle for the ballot. Their contributions were significant to the ultimate passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which attempted to fortify the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution ratified one hundred years earlier.

But the battle is not over. And great lessons have been learned which we should never forget. The most important is this: We will never be in a position where we can surrender the necessity to battle for the ballot. In June of 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States struck another blow to the Black franchise, ruling that states were no longer required to seek Justice Department pre-clearance for rule changes in their voting laws. This ruling has reopened the wound of Black disenfranchisement. We are far from free if we do not have free and full access to the ballot. And the battle for the ballot, even after 400 years, is still being waged.



ONE PERSON, ONE VOTE: OUR FIGHT FOR A FREE AND FAIR DEMOCRACY

ERIC H. HOLDER, JR., J.D.



For as long as America has existed, two opposing forces have fought over how we express and confer the rights and privileges of citizenship, freedom, and equality. Those who believe in a more inclusive nation have been countered by those who seek to maintain their own power. And today, we are facing a multi-pronged assault that seeks to roll back protections for voters, restrict access to the franchise, and redefine the way that power is gained and exercised in the United States.

We have seen this assault in voting restrictions, voter ID laws, and voter roll

purges that have unfairly, and in some cases illegally, impaired the rights of American citizens. We have seen it in map manipulation and gerrymandering that have allowed politicians to pick their voters so a party with minority views and minority support can illegitimately govern with majority power. We have seen it in Supreme Court decisions that gave secretive organizations the power to spend unlimited money; that gutted hard-won protections written into the Voting Rights Act; and that abdicated the Court's own responsibility to ensure justice in the face of partisan gerrymandering. All of these efforts prevent people from being heard—most specifically, people of color.

These voter restrictions and gerrymandering efforts are significant reasons why state legislatures and

Congress are not representative of the nation. They are why—on issues ranging from healthcare to gun violence to systemic racism to voting rights—our representative forums far too often do not adopt the policy desires of the people.

This series of injustices sets in motion a vicious cycle: By picking their voters, politicians insulate themselves from meaningful challenges. Politicians who are unaccountable to their constituents are emboldened to push more discriminatory voter suppression bills, more widespread voter purges, more pernicious voter restrictions, and more blatant gerrymandering to lock themselves into power for decades to come. The longer this process continues, the more difficult it will be to bring it to an end.

That's the bad news.

The good news is that we know what we have to do in order to make necessary, fundamental change. Far too often, we overlook the important races happening at the state and local level, but these are the political figures who often have the greatest impact on our day-to-day lives. We must elect state legislators and governors who are committed to legitimate representation and a fair redistricting process. We have to litigate against maps and restrictions that seek to disenfranchise voters. We have to fight for nonpartisan commissions and fair processes in every state. We have to pass federal reforms like the For the People Act, which bans the gerrymandering of congressional districts, creates standards

Far too often, we overlook the important races happening at the state and local level, but these are the political figures who often have the greatest impact on our day-to-day lives.

to protect voters, and helps remove dark money from our political system. We also need to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would enhance the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and restore key provisions that the Supreme Court erroneously gutted. In communities and districts across the nation, we have to establish and maintain the fundamental idea that power must be established and maintained through the will of the people.

I know our success is possible. After I left the Department of Justice, I set up the National Democratic Redistricting Committee to help end partisan and racial gerrymandering and ensure access to the franchise. In states like Colorado, Ohio, Michigan, Virginia, and Utah, we supported successful voter referendums to create citizen-led commissions to draw the maps or reforms that make the process less partisan. In North Carolina, we brought cases that required the creation of new, more fairly drawn districts. And across the country, we helped reform-minded candidates win elections to state legislatures, judicial seats, and governors' offices.

This work isn't about creating an advantage for any one party. All Americans have a stake in a democracy that prizes the idea of "one person, one vote." No matter your political persuasion or what policies you advocate, your voice will be stronger if politicians are required to be responsive to your needs. Political parties, too, should welcome a fair contest; if you are confident in your proposals, you should put them to the test. If you support democracy—not just the appearance of democracy but real governance that derives its power from the people—then you have an obligation to make the infrastructure of our democracy free and fair.

These proposals don't just uphold our democratic ideals. They also create better policy outcomes. They make it possible for members of Congress and state legislatures from different parties to work with one another in good faith—instead of focusing only on the possibility of a primary challenge from the most extreme wings of their party. They ensure that the people of this country can be heard over the noise of partisan posturing or the power of special interest money. Building a fair, representative democracy is how we achieve long-term advances on issues from

No matter your political persuasion or what policies you advocate, your voice will be stronger if politicians are required to be responsive to your needs.

employment to education, from healthcare to housing, and from civil rights to criminal justice. It's how we count every vote—and make every vote count. It is how we advance equality, opportunity, and justice in areas where too many Americans are still let down, left out, and left behind.

The job before us will not be easy; it never has been. But our aims are worth fighting for. We know from our history that the future is built by those who show up; by those who engage, resist, persist, and overcome. We have an opportunity—and an obligation—to build upon the work of all those who came before us. It is now our time to shape this nation into the diverse and compassionate community that has always been the promise of America. Make no mistake, we have the capacity to repair our country and forge a nation that recognizes the dignity of every human being and that finally makes real the promise of America.

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MEET JIMMY CROW



MARC H. MORIAL, J.D.
President and CEO
National Urban League

As a voting rights activist in New Orleans in the early 1960s, my mother, Sybil Haydel Morial, organized voter registration workshops to help Black citizens navigate the onerous voter registration process. The requirements for Black applicants at that time were arbitrary and unpredictable. One might be expected to compute one's age in years, months, and days, or recite the Preamble to the Constitution. The required identification might be a driver's license one day, a utility bill or Social Security card on another.

The tactics meant to intimidate my father, Ernest "Dutch" Morial—then serving as President of the local NAACP—were much harsher. My siblings and I were forbidden to answer the telephone after one of us intercepted one of the many obscenity-laden death threats he received. Each night when my father arrived home from work, he would honk his horn, and my mother would respond by flashing the carport light, hoping to startle any would-be assassins lying in wait.

That was Jim Crow.

After the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 neutralized Jim Crow's weapons of choice, Jim's son, James Crow, Esquire, rose up to take his place. James wore a suit and a tie instead of a robe and hood. He drew gerrymandered congressional and legislative districts to

dilute the power of the Black vote. Unlike his father, James would never utter the n word—at least not in public. Instead, he slyly referred to “states’ rights” and “welfare queens.”

But the Voting Rights Act proved to be a powerful weapon. In the first four decades after its passage, Black voter participation grew steadily until it finally exceeded the White rate in 2008, the year the United States elected its first Black President.

Black voters repeated the feat in 2012, the year President Obama was reelected.

Enter Jim Crow’s grandson, Jimmy Crow.

The U.S. Supreme Court unleashed Jimmy Crow’s power to interfere in elections in 2012 when it struck down the linchpin of the Voting Rights Act, saying states no longer needed federal oversight to protect Black voters from discrimination. By the next presidential election, nine of the 15 jurisdictions previously covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act had new restrictions in place, and Black voter turnout plummeted.

Even with the new restrictions, Black turnout had climbed to 66% by 2020—even reaching 70% in eight competitive states.

Jimmy’s no longer content with suppressing and diluting the Black vote; he wants the power to ignore election results altogether. And he is just as willing as his grandfather to use violence to achieve his goal. The insurrectionists who stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6 in an effort to overturn the Presidential election were armed with guns,

knives, and baseball bats. They assaulted about 140 police officers, bashing their heads, shoving them down stairs, stabbing them with metal poles, and blasting them with pepper spray.

We saw Jimmy’s hand in the dozens of lawsuits filed in the wake of the election that sought to invalidate votes in Black and brown communities: Detroit, where nearly 80% of the population is Black; Milwaukee County, home to Wisconsin’s highest percentage of voters of color; Philadelphia, whose population is 58% Black and Latino.

The Georgia legislature responded to high Black voter turnout in 2020 and 2021 with new laws that not only threw up nearly unprecedented obstacles to voting, but also set the stage for a state takeover of election boards in counties with large Black populations.

The legislatures of Florida, Kansas, Kentucky, and Montana also have stripped officials of election authority, transferring it to themselves. In all, 14 state legislatures have enacted laws to “politicize, criminalize, and interfere in election administration,” and 216 similar bills have been introduced in 41 states.

In a highly symbolic move, Georgia outlawed providing food and drink to voters waiting in lines—recalling the brutality of 1963’s “Freedom Day” in Selma, Alabama, when sheriff’s deputies beat and arrested volunteers who offered refreshment to the hundreds of people waiting in long lines for the chance to register to vote.



In 1965, the nation triumphed over Jim Crow by enacting the Voting Rights Act. To defeat his descendant, Jimmy Crow, Congress must pass and President Biden must sign the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the For the People Act.

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would restore Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. The For The People Act eliminates racially-motivated voter suppression tactics like cumbersome voter registration requirements, strict ID requirements, limited voting hours, and restrictions on voting by mail. It bans deceptive practices and voter intimidation. And it eliminates the favored tactic of James Crow, Esquire, the partisan gerrymandering that dilutes the political influence of communities of color.

Every day that passes without Congressional action to protect voting rights is an affront to the martyrs who bled and died for those rights. John Lewis may not have used the name “Jimmy Crow,” but surely he was referring to him when he said, “We must confront the fact that there are forces in our society that want to reverse that democratic legacy. They do not want to be subject to the will of the people but prefer a society where the wealthy have a greater say in the future of America than their numbers would dictate. They want to eliminate checks and balances and pave a route to a freewheeling environment for corporations to make money, even at the expense of the least and most vulnerable among us. All we have to do is say no to this tyranny and begin to stand up and speak out for the heritage of equality and justice most Americans believe in.”



MEGAN VARNER/GETTY IMAGES

ANTI-VOTING LAWS RESTRICT ACCESS TO THE BALLOT

ELIZA SWEREN-BECKER, J.D.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, voters turned out in record numbers in 2020—whether they voted in person or absentee.¹ During and after the 2020 election, then-President Trump raised frivolous claims that voter fraud, particularly in absentee voting, had tainted the election.² Despite these claims being repeatedly debunked, state lawmakers across the country have aggressively pushed legislation that would restrict access to the ballot box. In the first half of 2021, lawmakers in all but one state have introduced hundreds of restrictive voting bills, with restrictive policies already

enacted in at least seventeen states.³ The sheer volume of legislation makes these efforts to restrict voting access unique and all efforts to push back so critical.

A consistent theme in this legislation is limiting access to absentee voting. In addition, many of the restrictive laws enacted to date focus on imposing stricter ID requirements for absentee and in-person voting, limiting voter registration opportunities, and increasing the likelihood of voters being “purged.”

Americans increasingly turned to absentee ballots in 2020.⁴ The response in many states has been an increased effort to restrict the availability of absentee voting. In the first six months of 2021, more than half of the new laws restricting voting access limit absentee voting in some way.⁵ For

example, the new Georgia law will require voters to supply an ID number or a copy of an ID when requesting and returning an absentee ballot. The bill also dramatically shortens the timeframe when a voter can request an absentee ballot and seriously limits and undermines the effectiveness of absentee ballot drop boxes.⁶ The new Iowa law also limits the timeframe to apply for an absentee ballot and shortens the window for returning an absentee ballot. The Iowa law limits drop box availability to one per county and imposes additional restrictions on who can return an absentee ballot on a voter's behalf.⁷

Additionally, advocates and lawmakers continue to push for stricter voter ID requirements for absentee and in-person voters alike.⁸ Four laws have been enacted to date to tighten or impose new ID requirements.⁹ For example, a new Wyoming law will require that voters present one of only a few forms of ID before voting.¹⁰ This policy doesn't give voters unable to obtain ID the opportunity to affirm their identity and vote with a regular ballot.¹¹ In Montana, a new law restricts the use of student ID for voter registration and for in-person voting.¹² In Arkansas, two new laws impose harsher voter ID requirements: The first eliminates a voter's ability to vote by provisional ballot if he or she lacks ID;¹³ the second removes a voter's option to use a non-photo ID, even if the voter has a religious objection to being photographed.¹⁴ Lawmakers have also passed bills that will make the registration process more difficult.

For example, a new Montana law will eliminate Election Day voter registration,¹⁵ and the new Iowa law moves the deadline to register to vote from eleven to fifteen days before Election Day.¹⁶

Another major theme among bills that are moving or have passed is expanding opportunities to purge voter rolls—with four such laws enacted to date.¹⁷ The aforementioned Iowa law, for example, requires the state to participate in the United States Postal Service's change-of-address program as a mechanism of removing voters from the rolls.¹⁸ The new Utah law allows the state to remove voters' names from the rolls without any notice to the voter if the state has received notice that the person may be deceased.¹⁹

By August of 2021, at least 24 lawsuits had been filed in state and federal courts challenging many of these laws.²⁰ Eight lawsuits had been filed in federal court challenging Georgia's new law, including a case filed by the U.S. Department of Justice.²¹ In one suit, the Georgia NAACP and other parties claim that the law's restrictions on absentee voting—e.g., requiring ID with absentee ballots and curtailing ballot drop boxes—violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and the First, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.²² In Iowa state court, the Iowa branch of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) filed suit claiming that, among other provisions, restricting the number of drop boxes and limiting who can return an absentee ballot

on behalf of a voter violated the state constitution's guarantees of the right to vote, free speech and assembly, and of equal protection.²³

Beyond litigation, federal legislation is necessary to push back against efforts to restrict voting access, including the For the People Act (H.R. 1/S. 1) and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA). The For the People Act would make voting accessible for those who do not have the necessary ID and would prohibit the requirement for ID for absentee voting. The bill would also require states to provide drop boxes, eliminate excuse requirements for absentee ballots for federal elections, and require states to provide same-day voter registration for federal elections.²⁴ The For the People Act would create a floor for what states must do to ensure access to the polls. In doing so, the legislation would serve as a guard against the types of restrictive legislation that is moving or has passed in the states.²⁵ While the House passed the For the People Act on March 8, 2021, Senate Republicans stalled progress by refusing to start debate on the bill.²⁶

Just as important is the VRAA, which would restore the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to its full force. Because of the Supreme Court's 2013 *Shelby County* decision, there is currently no federal preclearance process in effect for states with histories of voter discrimination.²⁷ The VRAA would create new criteria to determine which states and jurisdictions would have to submit voting changes for review to the Justice Department or a federal court.²⁸ Passing the VRAA would allow the Justice Department or a court to stop these restrictive laws in their tracks.²⁹ Too many bills that would restrict absentee voting, impose stricter ID requirements, limit registration opportunities, and increase voter purge opportunities have passed across the country. In addition to challenging these restrictive voting laws in the courts—and in the court of public opinion—the passage of H.R. 1 and the VRAA is necessary in order to combat these efforts at voter suppression. The Congress must pass, and President Biden must sign, both H.R. 1 and the VRAA.

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- 1 Drew Desilver, *Turnout Soared in 2020 as Nearly Two-thirds of Eligible U.S. Voters Cast Ballots for President*, Pew Research Center, Jan. 28, 2021, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/01/28/turnout-soared-in-2020-as-nearly-two-thirds-of-eligible-u-s-voters-cast-ballots-for-president/>; Domenico Montanaro, *President-Elect Joe Biden Hits 80 Million Votes In Year Of Record Turnout*, NPR, Nov. 25, 2020, available at <https://www.npr.org/2020/11/25/937248659/president-elect-biden-hits-80-million-votes-in-year-of-record-turnout>
- 2 Stephanie Saul & Reid J. Epstein, *Trump is Pushing a False Argument on Vote-by-Mail Fraud. Here are the Facts*, *N.Y. Times*, April 9, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/article/mail-in-voting-explained.html>; Jim Rutenberg et al., *Trump's Failed Crusade Debunks G.O.P.'s Case For Voting Restrictions*, *N.Y. Times*, Dec. 27, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/26/us/politics/republicans-voter-fraud.html>; see also Donald J. Trump, Remarks at White House Coronavirus Task Force Press Briefing (April 7, 2020) ("Now, mail ballots—they cheat. Okay? People cheat. Mail ballots are a very dangerous thing for this country, because they're cheaters. They go and collect them. They're fraudulent in many cases. You got to vote. And they should have voter ID, by the way. If you want to really do it right, you have voter ID.").
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- 5 Brennan Center for Justice, *supra* note 3 (see enacted laws tracker).
- 6 S.B. 202, 2021 Leg. (Ga. 2021).
- 7 S.F. 413, 89th Gen. Assemb. (Iowa 2021).
- 8 The Heritage Foundation, *The Facts About Election Integrity and the Need for States to Fix Their Election Systems* (2021) (“A voter should be required to validate his or her identity with government-issued photo ID to vote both in-person or by absentee ballot [as states such as Alabama and Kansas require].”).
- 9 Brennan Center for Justice, *supra* note 3 (see enacted laws tracker).
- 10 H.B. 75, 66th Leg. (Wyo. 2021).
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 S.B. 169, 67th Leg. (Mont. 2021).
- 13 H.B. 1112, 93rd Gen. Assemb. (Ark. 2021).
- 14 H.B. 1244, 93rd Gen. Assemb. (Ark. 2021).
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- 18 S.F. 413, 89th Gen. Assemb. (Iowa 2021).
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- 28 John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, H.R. 4, 116th Cong., § 3(b) (2019).
- 29 See, e.g., *Texas v. Holder*, 888 F. Supp. 2d 113, 144 (D.D.C. 2012) (denying federal preclearance to a strict voter ID law), *vacated and remanded*, 570 U.S. 928 (2013) (vacating denial on the basis of the *Shelby County* decision).



PROTEST TO POWER – GOOD TROUBLE = GOOD POLICIES

MISSOURI STATE SENATOR
BARBARA ANNE WASHINGTON, J.D.

It has been said that everything old is new again. Nowhere has that become more apparent than in Missouri. Centuries-old tactics used throughout history by Negroes, Afro-Americans, Black people, and now African Americans are still being employed to create legislative change. So, it's a blessing we have our history to rely on; and a blessing when we are savvy enough to know how—and when—to use our history. The prevailing tactic to make change for us has been physical advocacy.

By now it should be common knowledge that the Voting Rights Act came to fruition in part because of the peaceful protests and marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965. Because of the activism displayed by those involved, then-President Lyndon B. Johnson moved forward with securing voting rights for African Americans. Black folks have always relied on protesting, marching, and cajoling those in power to realize rights and privileges our White sisters and brothers take for granted. By definition, advocacy is the public support for or recommendation of a particular cause

or policy. For African Americans, the means to reach that goal has been to take advocacy beyond just writing letters to elected officials. It is disappointing that in 2021 we must still employ the same tactics to secure equality and fairness that our predecessors used since our ancestors survived the Middle Passage: protest, march, boycott, and fight. Black folks have been using advocacy since Sojourner Truth became the first Black woman to win her son back in court from a White man in 1828. We learned from Truth that actually speaking up for what we believe is right leads to lifelong change; without her, I wouldn't be enjoying the right to vote or be a Senator.

Today's Missourians have employed the same activist tactics to facilitate changes in our state laws. As the Republican super-majority-led General Assembly has repeatedly denied human rights—that should be considered basic benefits for their constituents—Missourians did not rest on their laurels and wait around for the hope of newly elected leadership to answer the call. Instead, Missourians took to the streets.

Led by us, coalitions of union workers, women's rights groups, civil rights groups, and even newly formed youth organizations joined together and held press conferences, went door to door throughout the state, rallied at courthouses and steps at city halls, collectively fighting for much needed change. And just as that physical activism worked for African Americans throughout our history, physical, in-person, in-your-face advocacy is what led to change in Missouri.

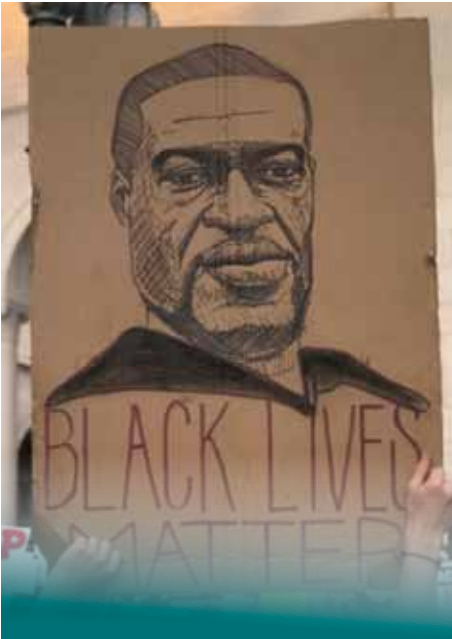
By maximizing the initiative petition process, these advocates were visible everywhere—securing more than enough signatures to place crucial issues on the ballot and put progress in the hands of the voters. But the advocacy didn't stop there. These same advocates worked hard to ensure voters reached the polls and passed the initiatives. Combining the initiative petition process with on-the-ground advocacy, voters were able to force the Missouri State Legislature to increase the minimum wage and scale back its war against organized labor.

One of the most important issues they were able to advocate into law was expanding Medicaid services to nearly 300,000 additional needy Missourians. In August 2020, activists were successful in using the Missouri Initiative Petition process to place the question of Medicaid Expansion on the ballot. Voters approved the measure, but the General Assembly refused to fund it—defying the voters' wishes. Those who spent countless hours fighting to win expansion at the ballot continued to push back against the tone-deaf Republican majority and took

their fight to court. A 2021 Missouri Supreme Court ruling ended the fight and ruled in favor of the voters.

Expanding Medicaid is the cherry on top for Missouri activism and a prime example of how new laws arise out of ardent advocacy. As early as 2014, more than 300 activists began fighting for Medicaid expansion. During their protest at the Missouri Capitol, 23 of the activists—predominantly African American and clergy—were arrested and became known as the “Medicaid 23.” Their actions in 2014 were reminiscent of the actions of the Civil Rights movement: they sang hymns, prayed, and practiced non-violent civil disobedience to promote change. They weren't successful in 2014, but persistent activism yielded a positive result in 2021.

By combining their constitutional right to free speech with the power of organizing, marching, and protesting, Missouri voters leveraged the combined power of protesting and voting. They followed in the footsteps of African-American heroes such as A. Phillip Randolph, by organizing to provide a united front; Harriett Tubman, by remaining committed to their fight; Frederick Douglass, by using the power of the press; W.E.B. DuBois, by creating new civil rights organizations; and Martin Luther King, Jr., by boycotting and using non-violent methods. Missourians, specifically African-American Missourians, have shown they have the formula for using advocacy to create new law. And in 2021, 300,000 needy Missourians benefited from their efforts.



OUR VOTE IS OUR VOICE: WHY ARE WE NOT SPEAKING LOUDER?

TIMOTHY SMITH, SR.

The murder of George Floyd last spring sparked the largest sustained protests in the United States in over 50 years. Floyd's death forced many White Americans to at last reckon with the fiery flames of racism that have always existed—a fire fanned non-stop for four years by the racist rhetoric and policies of President Donald Trump.

Trump's tenure as president energized White supremacists and organized fragmented right-wing extremists into a violent mass movement. The insurrection at the nation's Capitol in January was merely the inevitable boiling over of years of White resentment

toward Black progress. This progress was realized by the Black vote.

Fifty-six years have passed since the Voting Rights Act gave Black Americans full voting rights, but concerted efforts to discourage Black Americans from voting have grown in recent years.

Voter ID laws, gerrymandering, and voter roll purges have all served to restrict voter access. However, for decades Black voters in Kansas City have opted out of the elections that most affect their daily lives—local elections. Only 10.5% of Kansas Citians voted in the last local election. An average of 13% of Kansas City's registered voters voted in the last four local elections. The percentage of voters who cast ballots in Black communities during this same period is even lower.

To be fair, local elections nationwide experience lower voter turnout than federal elections. However, with homicide rates through the roof, persistent police brutality, inequitable school districts, a growing homeless population, and lagging COVID-19 vaccination rates in low-income communities, Black voters can least afford to continue passing on opportunities to elect capable leaders who represent their interests and are willing to address these issues.

Every election matters—school board elections as well as mayoral elections. City council races as well as county legislative races. State house and senate elections and special elections. All hold the keys to unlocking a greater quality of life for Black Kansas City. It is past time for the majority



of Kansas City's Black residents to move from outrage to political organizing, from passive resignation to self-determination, from protests to power. Acquisition of power begins at the local level, by voting in local elections.

No longer can we sit on the sidelines and allow others to speak for us. We must raise our voices, yes, but more importantly, we must use our heads, hearts, and feet to create blueprints for progress, educate our neighbors on how to participate in their freedom, and mobilize voters to the ballot box. Only then can we produce the next generation of political leaders to acquire the power our communities lack.

Black Kansas City deserves leaders who are not waiting until the next body drops to run in front of cameras for self-promotion and social media shares—leaders who are not pretending to speak for the Black community while conspiring with those who do us harm. Dr. King characterized these ravaging wolves in sheep's clothing in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* as [a person who is] "more devoted to order than to justice; who constantly says, 'I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action'; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom." While King was referring to White moderates of his era, his words could be applied to many in the Black community today.

Progressives must also learn the hard lessons from the latest mass movement for

Black progress, and in the future be mindful of how important the language used to organize is. Cries to "Defund the Police," although earnest in intent, were ultimately used by protectors of the status quo to derail the best opportunity Black Americans have ever had for police reform.

This defeat demonstrated how some progressives were satisfied with expressing anger rather than gaining power. Anger is a natural response to oppression, but anger alone has never freed anyone from bondage, literally or politically.

As we move from sustained protests to gaining political power, the strategies deployed must allow us to build broad coalitions to win elections across the political spectrum. This big-tent approach is necessary to achieve lasting change. The best strategies for progress are political, proactive, collaborative, and direct.

The issues Black Kansas Citians face will change at the speed at which we participate in the system of democracy. It is a flawed system, but it remains our best hope for improving a country that was not designed with us in mind. I believe we can inspire, encourage, and empower Black residents to realize their collective power to transform their communities, but it will require sustained organizing and dogged determination to bully the ballot box every election, until the enemies to our progress are routed out, and our future is one of our own design.

**CHARTING
THE PATH
FORWARD**

**IS EQUITY
ENOUGH?**



**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibits discriminatory voting practices and removed many barriers to voting, included a requirement designed to ensure minority voters across the country are able to participate equally in the

electoral process. That law was critical in ensuring minority voting rights and stood on the books for nearly half a century. In *Shelby County v. Holder* in June 2013, the Supreme Court invalidated an enforcement mechanism that prevented states from making changes to voting laws and practices without clearance from federal officials if they had a history of voting discrimination. In *Shelby*, the Supreme Court ruled that the formula for deciding which states and localities have a history of voting discrimination (and were therefore required to obtain pre-approval to changes in voting laws and practices) was unconstitutional. This severely weakened the federal government's oversight of discriminatory voting practices.¹

Since the Supreme Court's decision, states and localities have brazenly pushed forward discriminatory changes to voting practices, such as changing district boundaries to disadvantage select voters, instituting more onerous voter identification laws, and changing polling locations with little notice. These laws especially disenfranchise people of color, the elderly, low-income people, transgender people, and people with disabilities. Voters are more vulnerable to discrimination now than at any time since the Voting Rights Act was signed into law more than fifty years ago.²

The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act is on the floor in Congress.

What is the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act?

Fortunately, the Supreme Court's decision was limited in scope and recommended Congress create a new formula. The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act does just that and restores the protections of the Voting Rights Act by:³

- Modernizing the VRA's formula determining which states and localities have a pattern of discrimination;
- Ensuring that last-minute voting changes do not adversely affect voters by requiring officials to publicly announce all voting changes at least 180 days before an election; and
- Expanding the government's authority to send federal observers to any jurisdiction where there may be a substantial risk of discrimination at the polls on Election Day or during an early voting period.

What is the For the People Act?

The For the People Act incorporates key measures that are urgently needed, including automatic voter registration and other steps to modernize our elections; a national guarantee of free and fair elections without voter suppression, coupled with a commitment to restore the full protections of the Voting Rights Act; critical campaign finance reforms such as small donor public financing to empower ordinary Americans instead of big donors (at no cost to taxpayers); an end to partisan gerrymandering; and a much-needed overhaul of federal ethics rules.⁴

What is the Current Status of the John R. Lewis Bill?

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Terri Sewell (D-AL) on August 17, 2021, and passed the House on August 24, 2021, by a vote of 219-212.

The bill stalled in the Senate when Democrat Joe Manchin joined all 50 Republicans in opposing it. Without Manchin's and Arizona Senator Kyrsten Sinema's support for any reform or limitation of the right to filibuster, the bill will not pass the Senate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. We must urge Congress to pass comprehensive voting rights and election reform, including the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would further advance and expand voting protections for the historically disenfranchised. Your voice is critical in protecting our votes and participation in the U.S. election system. It's time to #ReclaimYourVote! Write your members of Congress and demand protections for your vote and your voice in our democracy!**
- 2. Civil rights and faith- and community-based organizations must galvanize our collective resources to register more voters and increase voter turnout for ALL local and national elections.**

1 <https://www.hrc.org/resources/voting-rights-advancement-act>

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 <https://nvl.org/civic-engagement>

5 <https://p2a.co/zNqjC67>

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Carlton Abner, DNP, has more than 25 years of healthcare experience, including 15 years of operational and leadership experience in a variety of acute care, academic, and corporate settings. He served as Dean and Lead Faculty for the Veterans Affairs Innovative Technology Advancement Lab at Cerner in Kansas City, Missouri. His healthcare, leadership, and operational experience also includes over 20 years of military experience. He continues to serve as a Lieutenant Colonel and Chief Nursing Executive in the Kansas Air National Guard. At Kansas City University, Dr. Abner serves as the Associate Provost of Campus Health and Wellness. Dr. Abner holds the following credentials: Doctor of Nursing Practice, University of San Francisco; Master of Health Services Administration, Trident University; B.S. Nursing, University of Central Missouri; and Board Certification in Nursing Informatics.

Katie Boody Adorno, a native of Kansas City and the daughter of two community organizers, has worked in public education in Kansas City, Missouri, since 2008. Seemingly always involved in the “startup” phase of organizations, Adorno was a charter corps member of Teach For America Kansas City, a founding member of C.A. Franklin’s middle school team in Kansas City Public Schools, a founding teacher at Alta Vista Charter Middle School, and eventually, a founder of LEANLAB. She holds a B.A. in English Literature with an emphasis in Dance, an M.Ed. in Middle School Education, and an Ed.S. in Education Leadership.

Dionissi Aliprantis, Ph.D., is an assistant vice president and a senior research economist in the Research Department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. He directs the Bank’s Program on Economic Inclusion and is responsible for

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Jean Peters Baker, J.D., was appointed Jackson County Prosecutor in May 2011 and elected to the position in November 2012. She is only the second woman elected to lead the Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office; the first, U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill, hired Baker as a young assistant prosecutor. Over her career in the prosecutor’s office, Baker has served in Sex Crimes and Child Abuse, Community Justice, Domestic Violence, Drug Enforcement, Family Support, Major Crimes, and as Chief Warrant Officer. For her efforts in fighting the drug trade in Kansas City, she was honored with the Excellence Award for Advancing COMBAT Objectives given by the County Prosecutor, police agencies, and community advocates. Baker earned a Bachelor’s degree from Columbia College in Columbia, Missouri, a Master’s degree in Public Administration from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and a law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law.

William Bowles is a Building Trades Journeyman in the Kansas City area. He is a Union Welder with multiple specialty certifications. He travels around the U.S. to share his skill sets and to work on projects. Bowles is an entrepreneur and an

owner of Brother's Mechanical Contractors. An inventor, he currently holds a patent on the "hair pocket weld cap." Bowles currently serves as Treasurer for the National Black United Front-Kansas City Chapter and is Co-chair for the Coalition of Reparations.

Alvin Brooks is the former Mayor Pro Tem and Sixth District At-Large Councilman of Kansas City, Missouri. In earlier years, Brooks served as a Kansas City police officer and a member of the Kansas City Board of Police Commissioners. He was the first African American to be named as a director of a department in Kansas City government. He was later appointed Assistant City Manager; he retired from city employment in 1991. Brooks founded the non-profit organization Ad Hoc Group Against Crime in 1977. He holds an undergraduate degree in History and Government from UMKC and a Master's degree in Sociology. He is author of the book, *Binding Us Together*, in which he reflects on his lifetime of community and public service.

Daniel R. Carroll, Ph.D., is a senior research economist in the Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. His primary fields of interest are macroeconomics, public finance, and political economy. His research broadly focuses on the interactions between income and wealth heterogeneity and important macroeconomic issues such as neighborhood effects, fiscal policy, and growth. Dr. Carroll earned his B.A. in Economics from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, and his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Virginia.

Carrie Coogan is Deputy Director for Public Affairs and Community Engagement at the Kansas City Public Library. She oversees a number of successful and innovative Library initiatives, including a hotspot lending program, Career Online High School, an award-winning digital encyclopedia of local history, and a

pioneering Tech Access digital training initiative that targets marginalized populations and has served nearly 2,000 people since its inception in 2017. Coogan is a founding member and current president of the Kansas City Digital Inclusion Coalition, serves on the board of the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, and was part of a select team that drafted Kansas City's Digital Equity Strategic Plan.

Mickey Dean is a former Deputy Director of Kansas City's Human Relations Department. While with the Department, he was primarily responsible for the city's enforcement of its civil rights ordinance. He is a founding member of the Kansas City chapter of the National Black United Front. He has tutored math at the W.E.B. DuBois Learning Center for over 30 years. He has been a mentor of young Black boys for almost thirty years in two programs – Simba Wachanga (Young Lions) and Males to Men. He has been intimately involved in Kansas City's Black Liberation Movement for the last 45 years. Dean attended Emory University and the University of Kansas, and he earned Bachelor's and Law degrees at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Niki Lee Donawa is the Chief Community Relations Officer of University Health in Kansas City, Missouri. In addition to community relations, she oversees food and nutritional services, retail and banking services, and volunteer management. She is an ex-officio member of TMC's Joint Conference and Quality Committee. Donawa is an appointee to the Kansas City Missouri Chamber of Commerce Women's Executive Council, the Community Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, and the Missouri Hospital Association Health Equity Board. Donawa earned her B.S. degree from the University of Central Missouri and her M.B.A. from Baker University.

Mark A. Dupree, Sr., J.D., has been the District Attorney of Wyandotte County, Kansas since 2017. He leads an office of over 60 employees and manages a significant budget each fiscal year. Dupree created the first ever Conviction Integrity Unit in the state of Kansas, which is responsible for ensuring that convictions obtained previously still hold integrity today. Dupree has practiced in a variety of legal capacities. He clerked in Jackson County, Missouri, served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney in Jackson County, served as an Assistant Public Defender in the Johnson County Public Defender's Office, and he and his wife practiced in their firm, Dupree and Dupree, LLC, Attorneys at Law. He is the Senior Pastor of a church in Wyandotte County. DA Dupree sits on the Kansas Bar Association Board of Governors and serves on the K.B.A. Executive Committee. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in Leadership Studies from the University of Kansas and a Juris Doctorate degree from Washburn University School of Law.

Cornell Ellis is a native of Kansas City. He received his B.A. in History from Avila University with a specialization in Ancient World Studies. After graduating, Ellis taught, managed, instructional coached, and worked in administration for eight years. Through his teaching success, he was able to participate in and lead advanced professional development opportunities such as the National Academy of Advanced Teacher Education and Better Lessons Master Teacher program. Through his passion and vision, he helped found AMPLIFY! Teachers of Color Conference and Brothers Liberating Our Communities, which both exist to sustain and increase the number of teachers of color.

Patrice Fenton, Ph.D., is a partner at the social impact firm, Pink Cornrows. She previously served as the director of Leader Support and Development at Education Leaders of Color

(EdLoC), where she led efforts to identify and support learning and developmental needs for 300+ leaders of color across the nation with the aim of increasing leader effectiveness. She has also served as Associate Director for the mayoral initiative, NYC Men Teach, at the City University of New York.

Secretary Marcia L. Fudge, J.D., is the 18th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Secretary Fudge served as U.S. Representative for the 11th Congressional District of Ohio from 2008 to March 9, 2021. She was a member of several Congressional Caucuses and is a past Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. In 1999, Secretary Fudge was elected the first female and first African-American mayor of Warrensville Heights, Ohio, a position she held for two terms. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Business from Ohio State University and Law degree from the Cleveland State University Cleveland-Marshall School of Law. She is a Past National President of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and she is a member of its Greater Cleveland Alumnae Chapter.

Philip Gaskin is Vice President of Entrepreneurship at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, where he is responsible for leading the Foundation's comprehensive entrepreneurship portfolio, including grantmaking, operating programs, convening, capital, research, and policy. Gaskin is charged with leading a team of more than 30 associates. Gaskin oversees the Foundation's national strategy focused on eliminating systemic barriers to entrepreneurship and enhancing economic activity through inclusive entrepreneurship. Gaskin is responsible for the strategic planning, program execution, grants process, budgeting, and operations of the Entrepreneurship division at the Foundation. Gaskin attended Pennsylvania

State University and graduated from California State University with a Bachelor of Science in marketing.

Janel George, J.D., is an Associate Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center. Her work and scholarship focus on racial stratification and inequality in U.S. education. She has written about the resegregation of public schools, discriminatory school discipline practices, Critical Race Theory, and resource equity. She has served as Legislative Counsel in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. As a civil rights attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., she worked with several campaigns and coalitions to leverage legislative and policy advocacy to advance equal educational opportunity. She also helped to advance the federal policy work of the Dignity in Schools Campaign, including securing provisions related to promoting positive and inclusive school climates in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. She also served as an adjunct professor at Georgetown Law and Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy.

Gwendolyn Grant is President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Kansas City. She is a strong and passionate advocate for social justice and economic empowerment for African Americans and women. Grant is engaged in numerous civic and community organizations, including Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education and Workforce Development (Secretary), Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) Buildings Corporation Board (President), KCPS Superintendent's Business/Economic Development Advisory Council, Citizens to Abolish Poverty Education Committee, Black/Brown Coalition, Urban Council (a coalition of legacy Civil Rights organization leaders), Police Accountability Task Force (Convener), and more.

Grant is the recipient of numerous honors, including the National Urban League's Whitney M. Young Leadership Award for Advancing Racial Equity, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority Inaugural Rosa Parks Award, William Jewell College Yates Medallion for Distinguished Service, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Community Service Award, and the National Urban League Association of Executives Academy of Fellows designation.

Shanette Hall began her career at the St. Louis County Police Department in 2010 as a Public Safety Dispatcher. Several years later, she followed in her father's footsteps and became a police officer with the same department. As the Recruitment Officer for the department, her tasks included speaking to individuals about employment opportunities in law enforcement and helping them begin their career with St. Louis County PD. She also helped to expand the Ethical Society of Police into the St. Louis County Police Department. This organization champions fairness and ethical treatment towards minority police officers and also fights against ill treatment towards citizens by police. Her time with the Ethical Society of Police has been most rewarding, as it is not very often the world gets to witness police officers working against police corruption and misconduct.

Cokethea Hill, Ph.D., is CEO and Founder of BLAQUE (Black Leaders Advancing Quality Urban Education) KC, a non-profit organization committed to significantly improving the academic, economic, social, emotional, and life outcomes of African-American children in public schools. She is an innovative collaborator with over 15 years of experience working in the non-profit sector organizing communities, building collaborative partnerships, and strengthening assets in low-income urban communities. A native of Kansas City, she earned her

undergraduate degree from Central Missouri State University, a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Avila University, and a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Kansas. Prior to founding BLAQUE KC, Dr. Hill managed a \$1.3M funding portfolio with SchoolSmartKC, a funding collaborative working to improve access to quality schools in Kansas City. Dr. Hill currently serves on several local boards and commissions, including Board Chair-Urban League of Greater Kansas City, Vice Chair of the City Planning Commission (KCMO), Urban Neighborhood Initiative (UNI), Turn the Page Kansas City, KC Rising Steering Committee, and Communities in School Mid-America Board.

Gayle Hill-Suber was a dedicated and effective teacher for 27 years in the Kansas City, Missouri, School District. For most of her career she taught special needs children. She was inducted into the Michael Jordan Education Club in 1996 when her sixth grade Language Arts student won an essay contest for the state of Missouri in his nationwide essay contest. There were over 2,000 contestants from the state of Missouri. Michael Jordan also awarded Hill-Suber a \$2,500 grant in 1997. During this time, she also served as Chairman of Professional Development at Westport Middle School. Additionally, she served as the Achievement First Coordinator at Westport High School from 2008 to 2010. Her volunteer efforts include service on the Board of Directors for Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center and Museum Board of Directors, Spirit of Freedom Foundation, Inc., and ArtsAliveKC. Hill-Suber is a Certified Deputy Registrar for the Kansas City Election Board.

Eric H. Holder, Jr., J.D., serves as Chairman of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee. Holder is an internationally recognized leader on a broad range of legal issues and a staunch

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Rev. Dr. Vernon Percy Howard, Jr. has served as President of the Greater Kansas City Chapter of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC-GKC) since 2015. He is also Senior Pastor at the historic St. Mark Church and adjunct instructor at William Jewell College. SCLC-GKC's chapter holds arguably the largest and most prolific MLK celebration in the country, which occurs for ten days in January and a weekend in April in collaboration with local Civil Rights partners. The local chapter has spearheaded several successful major initiatives under Rev. Dr. Howard's leadership. In addition to many other honors, he received the Invictus Social Justice Award from William Jewell College and the Harold L. Holliday Civil Rights Award from the NAACP.

Lydia A. Isaac, Ph.D., is Vice President for Health Equity and Policy at the National Urban League.

Dr. Isaac has a faculty appointment at the Johns Hopkins University in the Department of Health Policy and Management. She most recently served as the Executive Director of the Health Policy Research Scholars Program (HPRS) funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Before joining HPRS, she was the Director of Policy and Health Systems Analysis in the Office of Policy, Planning and Strategic Data in the First Deputy Commissioner's office at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. She has a Bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University, a Master of Science degree in Health and Social behavior from the Harvard School of Public Health, and a Doctorate in Health Policy and Management from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Jamie Larson, J.D., created and led the Los Angeles City Attorney's Recidivism Reduction & Drug Diversion Unit ("R2D2"), where she was at the forefront of developing modern criminal justice strategies rooted in evidence-based practices, data analytics, and social science to advance equity, public safety, and appropriate accountability. In her six years of service with the LA City Attorney, Larson created a host of criminal justice interventions that prioritized community health models over traditional criminal justice system approaches. In collaboration with several community and government partners, Larson created the LA DOOR (Diversion Outreach and Opportunities for Recovery) program, a strategy that uses peer outreach teams in lieu of law enforcement to proactively address addiction, mental illness, and physical wellness without waiting for police to intervene, and offering diversion opportunities when a law enforcement response is necessary. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from the Catholic University of America and earned her law degree at California Western School of Law.

McClain Bryant Macklin, J.D., is the Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives for the Health Forward Foundation, a foundation focused on access to healthcare, the social determinants of health, and health equity. She has an extensive background in policy at local, state, and national levels with a focus on the nexus of health, economics, and equity. She previously served as the Director of Policy and Research for the Greater Kansas City Civic Council and the Director of Policy for Mayor Sly James of Kansas City, Missouri. She also practiced at Husch Blackwell LLP, specializing in Public Policy, Campaign Finance and Ethics, White Collar Litigation, and Government Affairs. Macklin earned her M.B.A. from Florida A&M University and J.D. from The George Washington University Law School. She currently serves on the advisory board for the Network for Public Health Law and a number of local nonprofit boards.

Robbie Makinen is President and CEO of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA). He has led the Kansas City region through dramatic change by uniting five transit systems under one brand called RideKC. Today those agencies provide more than 15 million trips throughout the region. Prior to being selected CEO, Makinen served as KCATA Board Chair for five years and was on the KCATA Board representing Jackson County, Missouri, from 2007 until 2015.

Matthew McCurdy is passionate about applying social science theory, health equity frameworks, and design to develop creative solutions that improve health outcomes for Black people. He has experience working with Federal programs to create strategies, track performance, and evaluate programs to drive continuous improvement. McCurdy works as the Director of Programs at Emory Health DesignED, where he leads the equitable integration of tech into

wellbeing and healthcare. He earned a B.A. in Political Science from Georgia State University and a Master's degree in Public Health with a concentration in Behavioral Science and Health Education from Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health. McCurdy's areas of expertise include racism and health, social drivers of health, program management, design thinking, strategic planning, and program evaluation.

Carlos Moreno has been a teacher, a principal, a director, and now a Chief Executive Officer. Throughout his career he has been and continues to be an observer and a learner. A proud native New Yorker, Moreno is a passionate educational trailblazer committed to supporting school and district leaders to create high-quality, non-traditional schools designed to tackle systemic issues related to equity in education. He currently serves as Executive Director for Big Picture Learning, a nonprofit organization that, since 1995, has developed over 150 schools in the United States and throughout the world. He also co-founded and leads the Deeper Learning Equity Fellowship in partnership with the International Network for Public Schools. Moreno holds undergraduate degrees in Marketing and Business from Johnson & Wales University along with a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Recently Moreno was named a Pahara-Aspen Institute Fellow—a fellowship designed to sustain diverse, senior leaders who are reimagining public education.

Marc H. Morial, J.D., is President and CEO of the National Urban League, the nation's largest historic civil rights and urban advocacy organization. His energetic and skilled leadership has expanded the League's work around an Empowerment agenda, which is redefining civil rights in the 21st century with a renewed emphasis on closing the economic gaps between Whites and Blacks, as well as other

communities of color, and between rich and poor Americans. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in Economics and African American Studies, he also holds a law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C., as well as numerous honorary degrees from institutions such as Xavier University and Howard University. Under appointment by President Obama, Morial has served as Chair of the Census Advisory Committee, as a member of the President's Advisory Council on Financial Capability, and on the Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission. He was also appointed to the Twenty-First Century Workforce Commission by President Bill Clinton.

Commissioner Zora Mulligan, J.D., has served as Missouri's Commissioner of Higher Education since August 2016. During her time as commissioner, Mulligan led efforts to restructure state government to bring together the agencies responsible for postsecondary education, workforce development, and economic research to form one new department, the Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development. Mulligan previously served as chief of staff to the University of Missouri System president, executive director of the Missouri Community College Association, and assistant attorney general. She is a native of West Plains, Missouri, and a graduate of Drury College and the University of Kansas.

Janet Murguía, J.D., is President and CEO of UnidosUS, the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States. Since 2005, Murguía has sought to strengthen the work of UnidosUS and enhance its record of impact as a vital American institution. Murguía has also worked to amplify the Latino voice on issues affecting the Hispanic community such as education, healthcare, immigration,



civil rights, and the economy. She earned three degrees from the University of Kansas: a B.S. in Journalism, a B.A. in Spanish, and a J.D. from the School of Law.

Edgar J. Palacios is President, CEO, and Founder of the Latinx Education Collaborative, a nonprofit start-up organization that works to increase the representation of Latinx education professionals in K–12. He previously owned a nonprofit consultancy, EJPKC, LLC, and worked with organizations such as Community Builders of Kansas City, Junior Achievement of Greater Kansas City, El Centro, Inc., Show Me KC Schools, and the Kauffman Foundation. A bilingual nonprofit executive, Palacios served as Executive Director of Blue Hills Community Services (BHCS), a community development corporation situated in the heart of Kansas City’s urban core. He led BHCS through a merger with Swope Community Builders. Prior to his time at BHCS, he served as Senior Director of Resource Development & Community Engagement at Connections to Success and Chief Engagement Officer at Central Exchange. Palacios is an M.B.A. graduate of Rockhurst University and he earned a Bachelor of Music degree at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Kelvin W. Perry is a retired business executive who is serving his second term as President of the Black Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City. He served as President and CEO of Newspaper Electronics Corporation for 37 years prior to retirement. He joined that company in 1978 as corporate controller and acquired it in 1980. Perry was previously associated with CDC-KC and the public accounting firms of Arthur Andersen and Lester Witte & Co. He is one of the original founders of the Black Chamber, serving first as Treasurer and then as President. Perry has served on the boards of the Kansas City Greater Chamber of Commerce, Kansas City Tax

Increment Financing Commission, Consumer Credit Council of Greater Kansas City, Center for Business Innovation, and AdvanceKC Standing Committee. He is a native of Florida, and a graduate of Florida A&M University’s School of Business & Industry.

John A. Powell, J.D., is an internationally recognized expert in the areas of civil rights, civil liberties, structural racism, housing, poverty, and democracy. Powell is the Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, a research institute that brings together scholars, community advocates, communicators, and policymakers to identify and eliminate the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society and to create transformative change toward a more equitable world. Powell holds the Robert D. Haas Chancellor’s Chair in Equity and Inclusion and is a Professor of Law, African American Studies, and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley. Previously, he was the Executive Director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University, where he also held the Gregory H. Williams Chair in Civil Rights & Civil Liberties at the Moritz College of Law. Powell is the author of several books, including his most recent work, *Racing to Justice: Transforming Our Concepts of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*.

Kirby Ann Randolph, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor in the Bioethics Department in the Osteopathic School of Medicine at Kansas City University (KCU). She attended college in Massachusetts and earned a Doctorate in U.S. History from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include African American history, disability studies, and the history of medicine. Dr. Randolph worked at Truman Medical Center in Behavioral Health for seven years before joining KCU. Dr. Randolph recently joined the board of the Community Mental Health Fund, which awards grants to

nonprofit mental healthcare organizations in Jackson County using public funds. She has served on the boards of the West Philadelphia Mental Health Consortium; Region 7 Health Equity Collaborative; Mental Health America of the Heartland; and First Call Kansas City.

Jerika L. Richardson, J.D., is Senior Vice President for Equitable Justice & Strategic Initiatives at the National Urban League. She leads the organization’s advocacy, public education, and strategic work on civic engagement, police reform, criminal justice reform, and other justice-related areas. Previously, Richardson was Deputy Executive Director and the Senior Advisor and Secretary to the Board for the nation’s largest independent police oversight agency, the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board. She has also served as Chief of Staff in the Office of the Counsel to the Mayor of New York City and Special Advisor to the Mayor for media relations, criminal justice, and public safety planning. Before working in City Hall, Richardson was the Senior Spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Southern District of New York and a Field Producer and Off-Air Reporter for ABC News. She holds a J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School and a B.A. in English from Spelman College.

Cole Riley is an honors senior Political Science student at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. He is a member of the 2019 cohort of the Bluford Healthcare Leadership Institute and plans on attending law school after graduation.

Councilwoman Melissa Robinson serves on the City Council of Kansas City, Missouri for the Third District and is President of the Black Health Care Coalition. She has worked to achieve parity in health outcomes for Black people for over a decade. As Councilwoman, she has led legislation in economic incentive reform, public

safety accountability, anti-racism, violence prevention, affordable housing, and equitable municipal spending. Councilwoman Robinson is committed to economic mobility and economic development for historically disinvested neighborhoods in Kansas City.

Geraldyn “Geri” Sanders is an independent historical consultant, specializing in the community at 18th and Vine. She works on diverse projects and is a member of the design team for the reopening of the Kansas City Museum and the Community Remembrance Project through the Legacy Museum, founded by Bryan Stevenson in Alabama. She served as the Director of Collections at the American Jazz Museum and Archivist for the Black Archives of Mid-America. Sanders was also an adjunct professor at the Metropolitan Community Colleges-Penn Valley Campus, teaching African American and U.S. History. A graduate of the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Sanders holds both a Bachelor’s and Master’s in History, as well as a minor in African-American studies.

Ashley Shaw, Ph.D., is a Research Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas Alzheimer’s Research Disease Center (KU ADRC), where she leads the African American Clinical Cohort, an observational study designed to understand brain aging and memory loss. Her research interests include racial and ethnic health disparities in Alzheimer’s disease, dementia prevention through culturally tailored dietary interventions, and recruitment and retention of older minorities in Alzheimer’s disease clinical trials. Dr. Shaw’s current study, “Brain Healthy South Food Diet Intervention,” is aimed at developing a culturally tailored brain healthy diet and examining its effects on cardiovascular risk factors related to brain health and cognition in older African Americans. She received her Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Exercise Physiology, and

Master of Public Health and Ph.D. in Nursing at the University of Missouri. Dr. Shaw joined the faculty at the KU ADRC in 2021 after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the center.

Timothy Smith, Sr. is the founder of D. Smith Consulting Group, a leading integrated strategy and marketing agency in Kansas City, Missouri. At D. Smith, he has refashioned the integration of analytic-driven communications with digital and campaign-style organizing to transform public opinion, enhance reputations, manage crises, and compel people to action. He has proven that big money in politics is not the determining factor for success, implementing campaign strategies that resulted in clients defeating opponents who boasted 15 to 1 fundraising advantages. Smith is a graduate of Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas, where he earned cum laude honors in Legal Studies. He has contributed columns to the *St. Louis American*, *Michigan Chronicle*, and *Black Star News*. He appears frequently on radio and podcasts providing his thoughts on politics and social issues.

Ryan Sorrell has a diverse background, including working at one of the nation's most esteemed Black think tanks, one of Chicago's top B2B Tech PR agencies, a Top 3 global PR firm, and founding the largest Black digital media platform in Kansas City. During his professional career he has worked on brands such as Facebook, Samsung, and Google. Sorrell is co-founder of the Kansas City based abolitionist organization, Black Rainbow, and has engaged in a number of public talks as an abolitionist thinker, including NPR, PBS, a KC Art Institute Lecture, as well as the T-Mobile Speaker Series. Most recently Sorrell founded the fastest growing digital Black media publication, The Kansas City Defender.

Shaun Stallworth, J.D., received his Juris Doctorate from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law. As President of the Black

Law Students Association at UMKC, he led the effort to create a scholarship for students of color interested in attending law school—the Pipeline Coalition Diversity Scholarship. During his first five years of practice, Stallworth worked at Dentons US LLP. Since graduating from law school, he has been an active member of the Jackson County Bar Association. Stallworth is managing member of Zimri Development, LLC, a real estate development company.

Denise St. Omer, J.D., is Vice President of grantmaking and inclusion initiatives for the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation. She is responsible for overseeing grantmaking activities including the assessment and tracking of all major grants for clients that use the Community Foundation's grantmaking services, as well as oversight of the Community Foundation's discretionary funds. In addition, St. Omer is responsible for heading the Community Foundation's leadership work focused on equity and inclusion. She is a national trainer on grantmaking with a racial equity lens and served as a member of the Equity Advisory Group for Grantmakers for Effective Organizations. St. Omer currently serves as vice chair of GEO's board of directors. She earned a J.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law.

Eliza Sweren-Becker, J.D., serves as counsel in the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, where she focuses on voting rights and elections. Prior to joining the Brennan Center, Sweren-Becker was a litigation associate in private practice at Boies Schiller Flexner LLP. Sweren-Becker previously served as a Ford Foundation Fellow in the ACLU's Speech, Privacy, and Technology Project. She then served as a law clerk to Hon. Christina A. Snyder of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California. Before attending law school, she was a research

associate for Latin America Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. Sweren-Becker received a Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School and a Master's degree in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School. She holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations, magna cum laude, from Brown University.

Linwood Tauheed, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and teaches introductory and advanced courses in Institutional Economics, Political Economy of Race, Class, and Gender, Economic Development, and a doctoral seminar in Interdisciplinary Research Methodology. His primary research interests are in Economic Methodology, Community Economic Development, and Analysis of Education. A major research project involves the development of "Critical Institutionalism," an interdisciplinary metatheoretical framework for developing models for evolutionary institutional change in social systems through social action. Dr. Tauheed holds an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Economics and Social Sciences, an M.A. in Economics, and a B.S. in Computer Science/Mathematics, all from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He is the current president of the National Economic Association, which was founded in 1969 as the Caucus of Black Economists and recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Qiana Thomason is a life-long Kansas Citian who has dedicated her career to the improvement of health and wellness across the region, with a special focus on communities experiencing significant health injustices. Thomason serves as president and CEO of Health Forward Foundation. Focusing on people most in need, Health Forward works through partnership and advocacy to transform communities so everyone has a fair and just opportunity for better health. Thomason currently serves on the board of

Grantmakers in Health, a national organization dedicated to helping foundations improve the health of all people. She also serves on the City of Kansas City, Missouri, Health Commission. Thomason earned her undergraduate degree in Social Work from Florida A&M University and has a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Kansas.

Honorable John M. Torrence, J.D., was a partner with the Kansas City firm of Hubbell, Sawyer, Peak, O'Neal & Napier from 1993 until his appointment to the bench as Circuit Judge in July 2001. He was previously a partner in the firm of Torrence and Wee and also served in the Jackson County Public Defender's Office from 1982 to 1988. He earned his Bachelor's degree in History from St. Louis University in 1979, and his law degree from the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1982. In 2010, Judge Torrence was honored by the Missouri Supreme Court with the ASTAR Award (Advanced Science and Technology Adjudication Resources). The award is given to judges who have taken 120 hours of court-related science and technology classes. In addition, Judge Torrence was given the 2016 Honorable H. Michael Coburn Community Service Award by Legal Aid of Western Missouri in recognition of his work to improve the outcomes of children in foster care while he served as Administrative Judge at Family Court in 2014 and 2015. Judge Torrence was elected by his colleagues to serve as Presiding Judge of the 16th Judicial Circuit Court of Jackson County in 2017 and 2018.

Rick Usher is founder and president of The Usher Garage LLC, a public policy consultancy focusing on entrepreneurship and the digital economy. As former Assistant City Manager for Small Business & Entrepreneurship at the City of Kansas City, Missouri, Usher has extensive experience in digital equity initiatives, support

for inclusive entrepreneurship, and building public-private partnerships for the benefit of the community.

Chase Wagner is the former Director of Corporate Communications at H&R Block. He brings 20 years of marketing, communications, and public policy experience to the company after spending time in both national agency and corporate settings. Wagner played an instrumental role in the launch of H&R Block's corporate responsibility efforts and community impact platform, Make Every Block Better. In his current role, he leads strategy and implementation of all external communications efforts, as well as corporate responsibility programming and corporate giving. Wagner spent eight years at Barkley, a leading national independent agency, where he was Vice President of Growth. He is a founding member of CSR Board, a community for corporate responsibility leaders at the world's biggest companies.

Missouri State Senator Barbara Anne

Washington, J.D., is a lifelong Kansas City resident. Prior to being elected to the Missouri State Senate in 2020, she served in the Missouri House of Representatives. During her tenure as a State Representative, she served as the Minority Caucus Secretary and on the Budget committee. Senator Washington is a Trustee with Metropolitan Community College and is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the Jackson County (MO) Chapter of the Links, Inc., Freedom, Inc., NAACP, the Missouri Bar, the Jackson County Bar Association, the National Bar Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, the Association of Community College Trustees, the Missouri Community

College Association, and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. Additionally, she is a board member of the Urban Neighborhood Initiative, the League of Women Voters, and United Methodist Women.

Ajamu K. Webster, P.E., has more than 40 years of experience in structural engineering. His areas of emphasis include analysis and inspection, structural design, rehabilitation, and renovation. Webster's roles have included preliminary and final design, project management, construction management, quality assurance review, project scheduling, and business development. As a licensed professional engineer in multiple states, he is known for his experience in rehabilitations and renovations of various building types. Webster is a member of the American Concrete Institute and the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Catherine Wiley is the Director of Marketing and Communications at Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, with responsibilities for brand management, fund development, and community outreach and engagement. Prior to joining Samuel Rodgers, she worked in business development for Hearst Television and Sinclair Media and in healthcare sales. Wiley currently serves as a board member for Northland Health Care Access. She is also a past board member of Awesome Ambitions, a program that mentors and assists high school girls to seek post-secondary education. Wiley holds a Bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism and is currently a student in the Executive MBA Program at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in the Bloch School of Management.

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provides an in-depth look into the socioeconomic gaps between Blacks and Whites in Greater Kansas City while also questioning the presumption that focusing on equity alone will ameliorate the systemic racial inequality that has persisted for centuries.

“This capacious report, covering the realms of economics, education, health, social justice, and civic engagement, is a sobering reminder of how far we have yet to go. With a focus on Kansas City, one of the nation’s heartland metropolitan areas, this report reminds us of the persistence of racial disparities in the most vital arenas of life. But more than that, it is also a reminder of the interconnectedness of these outcomes, of how systemic racial inequality exists, not just in the narrow sense of the word, occurring within each of the systems (be they our healthcare systems, educational systems, or voting systems) that occupy these realms, but also in the larger sense, of the interconnection of these systems across these realms: that structural racism is also a system of systems. And we must understand their operation in both senses.”

—**john a. powell, J.D.**, Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute at the University of California Berkeley and author of *Racing to Justice: Transforming Our Concepts of Self and Other to Build an Inclusive Society*



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