

HEALING THROUGH POLICY: CREATING PATHWAYS TO RACIAL JUSTICE

Policy and Practice Briefs

OCTOBER 2021

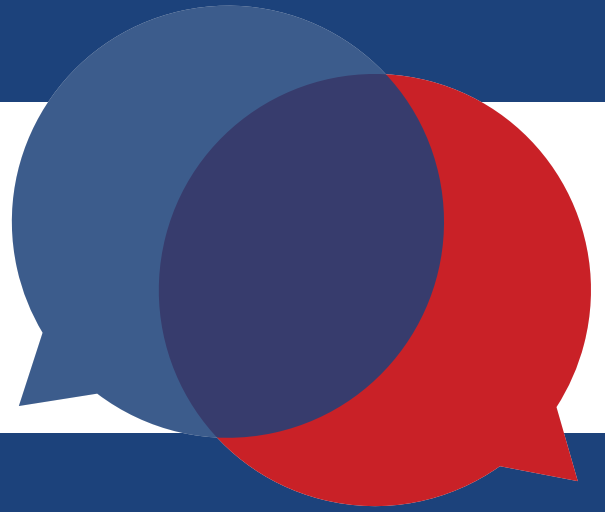


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HEALING THROUGH POLICY: CREATING PATHWAYS TO RACIAL JUSTICE

POLICY AND PRACTICE BRIEFS

Introduction

Healing Through Policy: Creating Pathways to Racial Justice is an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation, the American Public Health Association, and the National Collaborative for Health Equity. The goal of the first stage of the project is to curate a suite of policies and practices that can be implemented at the local level to promote racial healing and advance racial equity.

This project builds on the rapidly expanding consensus within public health that racism is a public health crisis.¹ Decades of research and scholarship about the role of the social determinants of health have increased awareness about how racism drives health and subsequently influences opportunities for health equity. Local jurisdictions can and do enact policies and practices that can dramatically influence the conditions in which people live, grow, work, and play.

Tobacco 21 is a clear example. The policy increases the age of purchase for tobacco products from 18 to 21, which is critical for reducing smoking initiation in communities of color, especially among children and youth, who are aggressively targeted by the tobacco industry's marketing and advertising. As observed by CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, as more cities began to adopt Tobacco 21, that momentum catalyzed change at the state and national levels. For example, in 2018, San Antonio became the first Texas city to

adopt Tobacco 21, the state legislature adopted it in 2019, and later that year in December, the policy was passed by the federal government. This is a shining example of the power of local action to spur widespread change.

As the COVID-19 pandemic revealed, a public health crisis requires a response equal to the scale and scope of the challenge. This project aims to accelerate the nation's response to the health crisis created by racism and its myriad consequences. Counties and cities can be incubators for creative and innovative solutions for addressing the most urgent needs and priorities of communities. However, it must be acknowledged that state legislative decisions can shape the landscape and options for local public health policies and practices.² Many decisions about funding and resource allocations, particularly for large public and private development projects, are driven by state politics. States' governments can also preempt local policy decisions. This intergovernmental perspective is also required when considering local strategies for addressing entrenched patterns of structural and systemic racism.

Healing Through Policy aims to provide local leaders options for policies and practices to move along the continuum from commitment to action for health, racial equity, and justice.

Guiding Principles

The founders of *Healing Through Policy* developed the following principles to ground and guide the initiative:

1. We recognize that the work of eliminating racism and redressing centuries of a culturally embedded belief in a false ideology of human value hierarchy must be comprehensive in design and implementation.
2. We aim to foster a cultural ethos and sustainable public policy and practice agenda to help bridge divides and create health equity. The intention is to transform not just policies and practices, but also the beliefs and motivation.
3. This work requires that we:
 - Envision an equitable future in which our nation has acknowledged the harms from centuries of racial hierarchy and is committed to a path toward healing to achieve the country's espoused aspirational doctrine that all are created equal.
 - Develop and strengthen the skills and capacity to reflect on our own and others' lived experiences, with empathy and compassion.
 - Meaningfully incorporate racial solidarity by building and strengthening cross-racial relationships and networks.
4. Our policy and practice options:
 - Are guided by the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) framework, which offers an overarching comprehensive strategy for adaptation by local communities and organizations to support progress toward needed systemic transformation.
 - Build upon the work of the predecessors of social justice and the existing work to advance racial equity, with room to promote and support innovation and creativity to address the unique challenges and priorities in each jurisdiction.
 - Intend to serve as an approach, not a formula, to measurable change. The suite of options aims to provide flexibility to meet the needs of localities, given the varying political and economic climates and structures.
 - Recognize that the long-term goal of achieving racial equity is a process and not a one-time solution.

Framework

Healing Through Policy uses the TRHT framework, a comprehensive, national, and community-based process launched by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in partnership with several local foundations across the country to plan for and bring about transformational and sustainable change, and to address the historic and contemporary effects of racism. TRHT recognizes that advancing racial equity and justice requires repairing past harms, addressing the underlying beliefs that fuel racism, and facilitating healing within and across communities.

The TRHT framework offers an overarching and comprehensive strategy for adaptation by local communities and organizations to support progress toward needed societal transformation through five pillars:

- *Narrative Change*: Transforming how we communicate about our past, present, and future. It's the "process of disrupting dominant narratives that normalize inequity and uphold oppression and advancing new narratives from our communities and individuals in historically marginalized groups...[to] imagine a different future."³
- *Racial Healing and Relationship Building*: Healing a societal racial divide requires recognition of the need to acknowledge the wrongs of the past, while addressing the consequences of those wrongs. Racial healing involves focusing on ways for all of us to heal from the wounds of the past, to build mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines that honor and value each person's humanity, and to build trusting intergenerational and diverse community relationships that better reflect our common humanity.
- *Separation*: The division of groups based on a particular characteristic, including race and/or socioeconomic status. It is fostered by historic and present-day land use and development decisions that perpetuate racial inequities, such as segregation, colonization, and isolation, which lead to concentrated poverty and limit access to opportunity.
- *Law*: The laws, legal systems, public policies, and accompanying practices and norms through which systemic racism has been and continues to be enforced at local, state, and national levels. A transformed legal and public policy system honors the dignity of all people, upholds the civil and human rights of all, and encourages full civic participation from all communities.
- *Economy*: Inequity is baked into economic practices and policies to sustain the false belief in hierarchy, thus shaping access and opportunity. Equitable policies aim to create an "economic democracy, where every person, family, and community of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds can individually and collectively participate and thrive in the U.S. economy."

While the policies and practice categories are organized according to the TRHT pillars, we recognize the intersectionality across the components and assert that they all must be addressed to make meaningful progress toward eliminating racism and its deleterious effects on health and well-being.

Summary of Proposed Policies and Practices

Healing Through Policy aims to provide local leaders with a pragmatic and achievable, yet aspirational and innovative set of policies and practices that can align with local priorities and needs and meet the following criteria:

1. Significant impact on health and racial equity, supported by independent evidence or expert opinion.
2. Acknowledgement and addressing historic racial injustices and demonstrates meaningful engagement of impacted communities.
3. Feasibility under local jurisdiction.
4. Successful implementation and support in at least one U.S. city or county.
5. Recommendation and approval by a panel of advisors.*

Using these criteria as a guide, we analyzed peer-reviewed and grey literature and identified the following categories of policies and practices under the five pillars of the TRHT framework. This suite of options provides examples that can guide localities in their work while providing the space for innovation and new practice generation.

Narrative Change

- Executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, and declarations that advance equity.
- Mapping, data collection, and analysis efforts to understand and address inequities.
- Racial impact assessments, frameworks, and other systems to achieve accountability.

- Redesigning public spaces to equitably honor our shared history.
- Creating curricula that are respectful, inclusive, and honor the diverse communities in which children attend school.

Racial Healing and Relationship Building

- Resolutions, dialogue models, racial healing circles, and restorative justice practices aimed at understanding historical harms and repairing relationships.
- Training and capacity-building for practitioners, educators, and service providers around overcoming bias and healing.
- Local truth commissions that promote racial healing.
- Acknowledgement, public apologies, and commitments to redress by localities for their role in slavery and/or advancing systemic racism.

Separation

- Zoning innovation for health and equity.
- Displacement and eviction protections to preserve the right to housing.
- Equitable transportation and planning to improve access to opportunity.
- School integration to promote social justice and social mobility.

Law

- Endorsement and implementation of 21st Century Policing recommendations and other comprehensive police reforms.
- Diversion of police funding to support alternatives to policing and prevention programs.
- Reclassification of violations, decriminalization, and bail, probation, and fees reform to address racial and socioeconomic biases.
- Immigrant-friendly policies and practices to promote equitable opportunity.

- Voting rights protection and expansion.

Economy

- Income and asset strategies to promote economic mobility of individuals and families.
- Equitable investment and development that builds on community assets.
- Compensatory redress to rectify historical policies that economically disadvantage communities of color.

The table below summarizes the proposed policy and practices, and offers a few examples. Expanded descriptions and implementation examples are found in the policy and practice briefs.

| Policy and Practice Category | Examples |
|---|---|
| <i>Narrative Change</i> | |
| Executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, and declarations that advance equity | More than 200 states and cities have declared racism a public health crisis. |
| Mapping, data collection, and analysis efforts to understand and address inequities | The HOPE Initiative provides state and national data to spur action toward health equity and an opportunity framework to set aspirational but achievable goals to improve life outcomes, especially for populations of color most affected by systemic racism and conscious and unconscious bias. |
| Racial impact assessments, frameworks, and other systems to achieve accountability | The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments convenes a Chief Equity Officers Committee that serves as the hub for regional collaboration and coordination on advancing racial equity initiatives throughout the region. |
| Redesigning public spaces to equitably honor our shared history | Virginia’s Loudoun County Public Schools established an interpretive display honoring Black individuals who made significant contributions related to education during segregation. |
| Creating curricula that are respectful, inclusive, and honor the diverse communities in which children attend school | Colorado passed the “Know Justice Know Peace” resolution requiring the inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and Latino studies in the curriculum by 2022, providing professional development to teachers and administrators around discussing racially traumatic situations, and ensuring that feedback loops are in place to ensure student competency and cultural responsiveness. |

| <i>Racial Healing and Relationship Building</i> | |
|--|--|
| Resolutions, dialogue models, racial healing circles, and restorative justice practices aimed at understanding historical harms and repairing relationships | Charleston, South Carolina passed a resolution acknowledging and apologizing for their role in slavery and creating an Office of Racial Reconciliation. |
| Training and capacity-building for leaders, practitioners, educators, and service providers around overcoming bias and healing | Jefferson County Public Schools in Kentucky and New York City Public Schools are supporting implicit-bias training in schools and robust training of educators in culturally competent classroom management. The goal is to improve disparities in academic outcomes and disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion among students of color, which reflects a systemic bias in the educational system. |
| Local truth commissions that promote racial healing | The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission was the first local truth commission in the United States. It was followed by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 and the Byrd Foundation for Racial Healing, which aims to promote racial healing, fight hate crimes of any kind, and facilitate widespread public dialogue on racial healing through educational programs. |
| Acknowledgement, public apologies, and commitments to redress by localities for their role in slavery and/or advancing systemic racism | Public apologies for wrongdoing have occurred in places as diverse as Virginia's Loudoun County Public Schools and the city councils in Charleston, South Carolina; Asheville, North Carolina; and Tampa, Florida. |
| <i>Separation</i> | |
| Zoning innovation for health and equity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-zoning, such as removing restrictions on single family zoning, minimum lot sizes, and parking restrictions • Inclusionary zoning • Accessory dwelling units • Zoning for food justice |
| Displacement and eviction protections to preserve the right to housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to return or preference policy • Right to counsel • Just cause eviction |
| Equitable transportation and planning to improve access to opportunity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation of equity goals and equity-driven processes into the fabric of agency planning and policy decisions • Transit-oriented development that prioritizes affordability and equity • Income-based fares for public transit |
| School integration to promote social justice and social mobility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlled choice enrollment and transfer processes prioritizing socioeconomic integration • Attendance zones and feeder patterns constructed to ensure racial and economic diversity • Expanded public school choice for families through interdistrict, magnet, and charter offerings |

| Law | |
|---|--|
| Endorsement and implementation of 21st Century Policing recommendations and other comprehensive police reforms | <p>The more recent editions of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing report focus on six pillars of police reform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillar 1: Building Trust and Legitimacy • Pillar 2: Policy and Oversight • Pillar 3: Technology and Social Media • Pillar 4: Community Policing and Crime Reduction • Pillar 5: Training and Education • Pillar 6: Officer Wellness and Safety |
| Diversion of police funding to support alternatives to policing and prevention programs | <p>In 2020 budget votes, campaigns to reallocate funds to meet community needs resulted in over \$840 million in direct cuts from local U.S. police departments, at least \$160 million investments in communities, and the removal of law enforcement from schools in 25 cities.</p> |
| Reclassification of violations, decriminalization, and bail, probation, and fees reform to address racial and socioeconomic biases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives to arrest, incarceration, and supervision • Individualized conditions for managing financial obligations • Reduce pathways to incarceration |
| Immigrant-friendly policies and practices to promote equitable opportunity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctuary policies • Welcoming City plans |
| Voting rights protection and expansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending the right to vote in local elections to non-citizens • Youth voting • Amendments to timing of local elections to encourage greater civic participation • Restoring voting rights to ex-offenders |
| Economy | |
| Income and asset strategies to promote economic mobility of individuals and families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the minimum wage and/or requiring a living wage • Universal basic income or guaranteed income • Down payment and mortgage assistance to support homeownership as a path to building wealth |
| Equitable investment and development that builds on community assets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing trusts • Participatory budgeting • Offices or task forces devoted to community wealth building and comprehensive equity packages/funds |
| Compensatory redress to rectify historical policies that economically disadvantaged communities of color | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensatory redress to individuals for past harms • “Super fund” for community development and investment in Black American communities • Tribal sovereignty acknowledgements and land return |

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

The American Public Health Association champions the health of all people and all communities. We are the only organization that combines a nearly 150-year perspective, a broad-based member community and the ability to influence federal policy to improve the public's health. Learn more at www.apha.org.

ABOUT THE DE BEAUMONT FOUNDATION

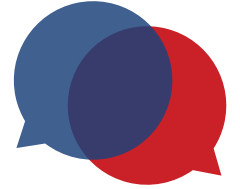
The de Beaumont Foundation creates and invests in bold solutions that improve the health of communities across the country. Its mission is to advance policy, build partnerships, and strengthen public health to create communities where everyone can achieve their best possible health. For more information, visit www.debeaumont.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE FOR HEALTH EQUITY

The mission of the National Collaborative for Health Equity is to promote health equity by harnessing data, developing leaders, and catalyzing partnerships across the many different sectors that share responsibility for creating a more equitable and just society. Learn more at www.nationalcollaborative.org.

ENDNOTES

- 1 American Public Health Association. Declarations of Racism as Public Health Crisis. <https://apha.org/racism-declarations>
- 2 Amsler, Lisa & Vieilledent, Thibault. (2021). Collaborative Governance in Local Government: How State Law Shapes Community Problem-Solving through Intrastate Preemption. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*. 10.1093/ppmgov/gvab007.
- 3 Lynn, Jewlya & Kathlene, Lyn. (2020). *Narrative Change for Health & Racial Equity: Exploring Capacity & Alignment*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346811466_NARRATIVE_CHANGE_FOR_HEALTH_RACIAL_EQUITY_EXPLORING_CAPACITY_ALIGNMENT



NARRATIVE CHANGE

According to the Truth, Racial Healing, & Transformation (TRHT) implementation guide, the concept of narrative change refers to the fact that the human brain is hardwired to capture stories and associated images to construct conscious and implicit meaning and beliefs. Stories make up our individual and collective narratives about reality. Achieving racial equity and healing from the trauma of centuries of legal, institutional, and structured racial hierarchy requires transforming our experiences, stories, and understandings about the equal and inherent value of all humanity.¹

At a practical level, narrative change refers to transforming how we communicate about our past, present, and future. It's the "process of disrupting dominant narratives that normalize inequity and uphold oppression and advancing new narratives from our communities and individuals in historically marginalized groups... [to] imagine a different future."² The task of creating new narratives about human value means supporting efforts to create and distribute new, complex, and complete narratives in all the ways we communicate, including through entertainment, journalism, digital and social media, school curricula, museums, and monuments and parks.

Narrative change also involves direct conversations in multiracial, multiethnic tables in communities. Doing so can influence people's perspectives, perceptions, and behaviors about and toward one another so that we can work

more effectively and productively toward community-based change. The national — and international — change generated by 2020's racial justice movement vividly demonstrates the enormous impact that narrative change can have.

Stories or narratives are how we create meaning. They shape what we perceive to be true, possible, and good. They are central to the development of our worldview and the values we hold sacred.³ These narratives create the scaffolding under which we co-create the systems and structures that govern our lives and influence our access to resources and our collective health and well-being.

Narrative change is a key part of building a shared reality of interconnectedness and equality. False beliefs in a hierarchy of human value are the bedrock on which this country was founded, as evidenced by the colonization of and

continued theft from Indigenous peoples, the enslavement and institutionally sanctioned terrorizing of and systematic theft from African American communities, the internment of Japanese Americans and continued othering of Asian American communities, and the historic and continued disenfranchisement and marginalization of people of color. These narratives are fundamentally about excluding and dehumanizing certain groups. As a result of these beliefs, individuals, organizations, and systems often unconsciously and unintentionally reflect and perpetuate the structural and institutional racism that is so deeply embedded in our society.

We live in an increasingly polarized environment that drives false and exaggerated beliefs about our differences and contributes to the dehumanization of people who live, look, speak, and act differently than we do. Research from Beyond Conflict's Polarization Index Project asserts that "when polarization in the United States becomes more about identity than disagreement on issues, it becomes toxic. Increasingly, Americans who identify themselves as either Democrats or Republicans view one another less as fellow citizens and more as enemies who represent a profound threat to their identities, creating a form of American sectarianism. ...Once we adopt the lens of 'us vs. them,' a range of unconscious psychological processes take root that accelerate toxic polarization and distort the ways we see one another and understand the world around us... The more we feel disliked and dehumanized by members of the other party, the more likely we are to express greater dislike and dehumanization toward them. In this way, the divide between actual and perceived dislike and dehumanization

can create a downward spiral of hostility that fuels further toxic polarization."⁴ Disrupting polarization requires that we collectively overcome the enduring legacies of racism, colonization, marginalization, and the false belief in a racial hierarchy. Drawing from Louison Lavoy, "to counter and inoculate against false messages, society must find a way to rebuild a shared reality that will encourage positive forms of communication."⁵ Below is a suite of policies and practices that localities can implement to build narratives of interconnectedness that are sustainable and grounded in data and equity.

States and localities play an important role in changing the narrative related to shared values and interconnectedness. Entities at these levels can undertake and implement a variety of policies and practices, including executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, and declarations to advance racial equity; mapping, data collection, and analysis to understand and address inequities and measure progress; racial impact assessments and other systems to achieve accountability; reimagining public spaces to equitably honor our shared history; and advocacy for and creation of curricula that are respectful, inclusive, and honor the diverse communities in which children attend school. These are not the only places that narrative change plays an important role in states and localities. We recognize the interconnectedness of narrative change and other areas of the TRHT framework. These issues are intersectional and oftentimes non-linear. There are critical areas such as democracy and voter suppression as well as exclusionary immigration policies that are supported by harmful and exclusionary narratives. These

areas of policy have been reflected in the Separation and Law briefs.

We've chosen these policy and practice categories because they:

- Recognize the emergent and evolving nature of efforts to dismantle racism and its foundational false belief in a hierarchy of human value.
- Promote and support innovation and creativity to address the unique challenges and priorities in a given jurisdiction.
- Stimulate and accelerate the pace of innovation to address systemic racism and other structures of inequity.

KEY POLICY AND PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Executive orders, resolutions, ordinances, and declarations to advance racial equity

Increasingly publicized instances of police brutality, along with the stark inequalities exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, have spurred action in states and localities across the country. Several states, cities, and localities have turned to executive ordinances, resolutions, and declarations as tools to advance racial and health equity. More than 200 states, cities, and localities have declared [racism a public health crisis](#). These statements are a first and important step to narrative change in that they illuminate the structural nature of inequality, creating space for dialogue and collaboration, and spurring changes across all sectors of government to shrink racial health gaps. There is evidence that these ordinances lead to further action. In 2017, after Wisconsin was the first state to proclaim racism a public health crisis, more than 4,000 county employees, including judges and police, received racial equity training, according to Nicole Brookshire, director of the county's Office on African American Affairs.⁶

One year after declaring racism a public health crisis, [Milwaukee County](#) passed an ordinance that commits the

county government to identify and address policies, practices, and power structures that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, work in favor of white people and create barriers for Black, brown, and Indigenous people. The ordinance commits to building a more diverse and inclusive workforce; ensuring Milwaukee County employees at all levels are involved in designing equitable programs and services that meet the needs of the community; creating opportunities for community members to co-design services; tracking and analyzing data to better understand the impact of county services; generating new sources of revenue; implementing additional efficiencies to address the structural deficit; and making needed investments to advance racial equity. Similar ordinances and resolutions to address structural racism and advance racial equity have been implemented across the country in many places, including [Carlisle, Pennsylvania](#); [Dane County, Wisconsin](#); [Minneapolis](#); [Spokane, Washington](#); [Southfield, Michigan](#); [Wheat Ridge, Colorado](#); and the state of [California](#).

There are also regional efforts to do this work. The Washington, D.C. area's Metropolitan Washington Council of Government (MWCOG) passed a [resolution](#) to embed anti-racism and equity into MWCOG's operations and decision-making. The National Association of Attorneys General — a nonpartisan organization of 56 state and territory attorneys general — launched Attorney General Karl A. Racine's presidential initiative, "[The People v. Hate: Standing Up](#)

[for Humanity](#)." The initiative aims to work with attorneys general to raise awareness of hate and bias, prevent hate from taking root in communities, support residents who have experienced hate, and develop and share best practices on improving hate crime data. The National Civic League has created [model orders](#) and ordinances for states and localities to adapt, including executive ordinances on diversity training for board and commission members, police accountability, and racial justice.

Mapping, data collection, and analysis efforts to understand and address inequities and measure progress

Data collection and analysis, particularly disaggregated data collection and analysis, are crucial steps in mapping progress toward equity. Creating timely systems for data collection and analysis are important steps toward documenting progress and motivating action to achieve greater equity. Mapping can be a powerful tool in changing the narrative of how racially marginalized and economically divested communities came into existence and the policy choices and governmental decisions that have perpetuated disparities. Many of the localities that have declared racism a public health crisis have used racial equity analyses and other forms of data analysis to frame the disparate impact of public health problems and identify solutions. Researchers, universities, hospitals, health systems, and even communities have roles in ensuring that these data are accurate, timely, and actionable. They also have a role in ensuring that data are shared with communities and are used to tell a story of what's possible, what's working, and where gaps still exist that prevent equitable opportunities for health and well-being. Data that are embedded in stories help to simplify complex phenomena and provide context, insight, and interpretation that

make data meaningful and analytics more relevant and interesting. Narratives that are grounded in data appeal to the head and the heart in ways that move and motivate policy- and other decision-makers to effect change. Examples of uses of mapping, data collection, and analysis for narrative change are provided below.

There are numerous efforts to track disparities at the local and state level. The [Health Opportunity and Equity \(HOPE\) Initiative](#) is an interactive data tool designed to help states and the country move beyond simply measuring disparities to spur action toward health equity. The HOPE Initiative tracks social determinants of health and health outcomes by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. It uses an opportunity framework to set aspirational but achievable goals to improve life outcomes — especially for populations of color most affected by systemic racism and conscious and unconscious bias. The HOPE Initiative shifts the focus from deficits/disparities to building opportunities for all. Its measures have an equity focus at the state and national levels that complement other rich data sources such as County Health

Rankings and Roadmaps, America's Health Rankings, and the Racial Equity Index.

[County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#) provides data, evidence, guidance, and examples from nearly every county in all states to build awareness of the factors that influence health and support community leaders' ability to improve health and increase health equity. These data have been used in various localities to advance change. In Nevada, data on the disparate impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on communities of color were used to bolster efforts to create a [proclamation](#) declaring racism a public health crisis in August of 2020.⁷ [America's Health Rankings](#) provides a wide variety of health and health-related information in the areas of social and economic factors, the physical environment, health outcomes, behaviors, and clinical care to help policymakers, advocates, and individuals understand a population's health in a holistic, inclusive manner. The National Equity Atlas' [Racial Equity Index](#) helps cities, regions, and states identify priority areas for advancing racial equity, track progress over time, and set specific goals for closing racial gaps. These data have been used in the San Francisco Bay Area to track which communities are hardest hit by COVID-19.⁸ Diversity Data Kids is a research project that examines who our children are, whether they have what they need to grow up healthy and achieve their full potential, whether social policies are well designed to improve children's lives, and how to improve such policies for greater equity. Their [Child Opportunity Index](#) measures and maps the quality of resources and conditions that matter for children to develop in a healthy way in the neighborhoods where they live. The Pinellas County, Florida Juvenile Welfare Board and the

University of South Florida worked with researchers at Diversity Data Kids to use Child Opportunity Index data to explore the relative contributions of place, school, and individual/family variables on student absenteeism.⁹ In Chicago, the Child Opportunity Index found that nearly 300,000 children were growing up in areas of low opportunity and nearly 1 in 2 Black and Latino children lived in areas of low opportunity, compared to 1 in 50 white children.¹⁰ The census tract-level data were used by the public health department's ReCAST (Resiliency in Communities After Stress and Trauma) program to identify neighborhood blocks where programming was most needed.

There are also a number of innovative tools for applying a racial equity lens through maps and spatial analysis to reveal and understand inequities in experiences and outcomes, identify barriers to equality, and support informed and equitable decision-making within localities. According to Samir Gambhir of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, "racial and social inequity often manifest as spatial inequity and local issues tend to have a regional scope and variation (e.g., school performance, housing vacancy)."¹¹ Mapping allows us to view, understand, question, interpret, and visualize data in multiple ways that reveal relationships, patterns, and trends. The technology company Esri has developed [GIS for Racial Justice](#), which uses geographic information systems (GIS) for racial equity mapping projects on issues such as [Los Angeles' Equity Index](#), redlining and exposure to urban heat islands, race, and environmental justice in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, [COVID-19 response in the Navajo Nation](#), [the preservation of African American heritage](#), and [more](#). The [Connecticut Health Equity Index](#) measures social

determinants of health at the community level, including housing, education, safety, employment, environmental quality, economic stability, and civic engagement. The index generates community-specific scores and GIS maps that show neighborhood-by-neighborhood variations within each municipality for a given social determinant or health outcome. The index also provides direction for collecting the narrative of those experiencing or witnessing health inequities. This narrative may be collected from interviews or recorded through media including photos, video, and audio. Local public health departments, in partnership with community leaders, organizations, and residents, can use this evidence-based information for strategic planning, community assessment, grant

writing, and community engagement activities. Asheville, North Carolina received the North Carolina G. Herbert Stout Award for Visionary Use of GIS in support of the city's [Mapping Racial Equity project](#). The GIS team worked with the Asheville Office of Equity and Inclusion to use spatial analysis to map and record the city's racial history. This included mapping out areas where redlining and urban renewal occurred and crowdsourcing African American history, displacement, and neighborhood change. Several cities, regions, and states have similar equity mapping projects, including [Atlanta](#); Austin, Texas; [King County, Washington](#); [Lansing, Michigan](#); [Los Angeles](#); [New Orleans](#); [New York City](#); [Portland, Oregon](#); [Richmond, Virginia](#); and the state of [Massachusetts](#).

Racial impact assessments, frameworks, and other systems to achieve accountability

Efforts are taking place across the country to embed racial equity impact assessments and other tools into the way local organizations do their work, including the use of racial equity impact assessments and measurement frameworks to track and eliminate disparities; passage of legislation that requires the use of racial equity impact assessments and creates equity offices and officers; and the development of cross-sector collaborative bodies that advance equity. The persistence of deep racial disparities and divisions across society are evidence of institutional racism — the routine, often invisible and unintentional, production of inequitable social opportunities and outcomes — and beliefs in a hierarchy of human value. When racial inequity is not consciously addressed, it is often unconsciously replicated. Racial

impact assessments, frameworks, and systems of accountability are key tools for ensuring equity is embedded in the fabric of institutions and systems. They support the work we do to reimagine new narratives about the ways we can relate to, care for, and provide for one another and create a more equitable and expansive shared future.

Racial equity impact assessments (REIAs) are systematic examinations of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. They're used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans, and budgetary decisions.¹² As Nathan Chomilo states, "requiring a racial equity assessment at the start of the

development of research proposals aimed at answering policy questions can help ensure investigators have, at the very least, stopped to ask how their work may or may not contribute to structural racism or advance racial justice. It can help ensure more attention is paid to making the health system more antiracist instead of solely helping patients and enrollees more efficiently navigate a system that produces racist outcomes.”¹³ Cities and states across the country are utilizing REIAs to track their progress and create accountability structures for their racial equity efforts. Examples of the utilization of impact assessments in organizational work, and of legislation and practice at the state and local levels, are provided below.

In 2015, the mayor of [St. Paul, Minnesota](#) directed all city departments to create annual racial equity plans and developed a racial equity assessment and training for use in city operations and services. [Minneapolis](#) has been on a more than 10-year journey to establish institutional accountability and operationalize the city's equity efforts. [Baltimore City](#) Councilman Brandon Scott shepherded a bill to create an Equity Assessment Program that was passed by the city council and signed into law in August 2018. The bill authorizes and charges Baltimore with conducting a racial equity assessment, providing necessary training, designating responsible city staff, and instituting metrics to assess and review the outcomes and effectiveness of any policies and investments made. In 2019, the [Arlington, Texas](#) county board approved a resolution that commits the county to establishing racial equity targets in policymaking and measures and developing an equity scorecard. [Madison, Wisconsin](#) also uses racial equity tools as a part of the development of city

policies, plans, programs, and budgets. In Washington state, King County's [Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan](#) is using an [Equity Impact Review tool](#) to intentionally consider the promotion of equity in the development and implementation of key policies, programs, and funding decisions. [Chicago United for Equity's](#) fellows work with local community leaders to tackle citywide issues of injustice using REIAs. Funding is a critical consideration when recommending the use of REIAs. These assessments can be costly to implement and require funded, rather than merely voluntary efforts. Training and capacity-building on the use of these assessments are also important components of implementation, especially in local, micro, and rural communities.

Rather than implement REIAs in isolation, many localities have developed jurisdiction-wide and departmental racial equity action plans aimed at achieving racially equitable outcomes across several systems and performance measures. Based on PolicyLink's National Equity Atlas, Fairfax County, Virginia's [Equitable Growth Profile](#) synthesizes data across several community indicators to make the case for narrowing racial disparities. The Equitable Growth Profile uncovers disparities by income and other measures of well-being across a dozen community measures to illustrate the racial and social disparities that undermine Fairfax's economic growth.

Race Forward's Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) uses its [Racial Equity Toolkit](#) and [Racial Equity Core Teams guide](#) to provide organizations and localities with data-driven tools and strategies to establish and scale cross-departmental equity frameworks and implementation plans. GARE has developed research, frameworks, and

programs such as [Racial Equity Here](#) to provide city governments with tools, resources, and trainings to analyze how their operations impact people of color and lead to the implementation of outcome-driven action plans. Additional GARE programs include [Advancing Racial Equity](#), which uses a learning cohort model to provide racial equity training in cities and counties; a racial equity tool that can be used in policy, practice, program, and budget decisions; a capacity-building plan and organizational structure to institutionalize equity; sample policies and practices to advance racial equity; and a racial equity action plan template that can be used to create jurisdiction-specific plans. GARE has incubated other projects that now stand alone, including the [Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity](#), which helps California state government entities learn about, plan for, and implement activities that embed racial equity approaches into institutional culture, policies, and practices, and [Inclusive Dubuque](#) in Iowa, a peer-learning network of partners committed to creating an informed, equitable, and inclusive community where all people are respected, valued, and engaged. GARE has also helped [Dane County, Wisconsin](#) develop its jurisdiction-wide strategic plan for advancing equity and launched a pilot of their racial equity scorecard with eight jurisdictions to develop a model of tracking equity metrics that facilitates learning across jurisdictions.

Over the past 15 years, there have been a number of legislative efforts to embed equity into the way that state and local government departments operate. Cities like [Tacoma, Washington](#) and [Boston](#) have implemented [Health and Equity in All Policies](#). The [REACH Act](#), passed in November 2020, established Washington,

D.C.'s Council Office of Racial Equity, led by the District's new Chief Equity Officer; created a new REIA for D.C. Council legislation; calls for the training of all D.C. government employees on racial equity; creates a Racial Equity Tool to ensure the District government is accountable; and establishes a Commission on Racial Equity, Social Justice, and Economic Inclusion to continue to oversee the District's efforts.

[California has added an equity requirement](#) to its COVID-19 response, requiring large counties to bring down case rates in specific neighborhoods designated by the California Healthy Places Index before reopening restrictions would be lessened countywide. In 2018, New Jersey passed [S-677/A-3677](#), which requires the state's Office of Legislative Services to prepare racial impact statements for policy changes that affect pretrial detention, sentencing, and parole. [SB 463](#) was passed in Oregon in 2013 and provides a process for formally requesting racial impact statements when considering criminal justice and child welfare legislation. In 2008, Iowa passed the nation's first racial impact statement measure, [HF 2393](#), which allows policymakers to assess the racial impact of proposed changes to sentencing and parole policies. That same year, Connecticut became the second state to authorize racial impact statements through [Public Act No. 18-78](#) for proposed criminal justice policies. Bills and amendments concerning pretrial or sentenced populations are now subject to racial impact analysis.

Not only is it important to measure equity, but there must also be staff, systems, and processes in place to ensure sustainability, ongoing accountability, measurement, training, and implementation of equity efforts. Increasing representational equity

in developing positions, committees, long- and short-term commissions, and offices for accountability to racial equity are important steps to ensure sustainability. According to a report from Montgomery County, Maryland's Office of Legislative Oversight, several jurisdictions across the country have developed new departments or expanded the scope of existing departments to support equity work in their jurisdictions.¹⁴ These departments coordinate jurisdiction-wide equity efforts, train staff, help departments utilize racial equity tools, and develop departmental racial equity plans that align with jurisdiction-wide strategic plans.

In [Charleston, South Carolina](#), an ordinance was passed to create a special commission on equity, inclusion, and racial conciliation. [Ashland, Oregon](#) passed an ordinance to create a Social Equity and Racial Justice Commission to adopt anti-racist measures and draft a concrete plan to accomplish equity in Ashland. In the Washington, D.C. metro region, Fairfax County, Virginia;

Montgomery County, Maryland; and Washington, D.C., have used legislation to create racial equity offices whose teams "assess how budget and policy choices will address long-standing disparities in health, education, income and more."¹⁵ The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) convenes a [Chief Equity Officers Committee](#) that serves as the hub for regional collaboration and coordination on advancing racial equity initiatives throughout the region, within COG's member local governments, and through COG's work; shares information, data, resources, and best practices to advance racial equity; serves as a forum for cross-jurisdictional discussion; and coordinates COG regional education and training initiatives. Equity offices have been created in a vast number of cities across the country, including [Asheville](#), North Carolina; [Austin](#), Texas; [Chicago](#); [Denver](#); [Minneapolis](#) and [St. Paul](#), Minnesota; [Oakland](#) and [San Francisco](#), California; [Philadelphia](#); and [Portland](#), Oregon.

Redesigning public spaces to equitably honor our shared history

In "Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity," Open Society Foundations posits that we must pay equal attention "to envisioning narratives that advance racial justice and health equity. Through honoring stories that direct attention to a different, more equitable future, and through elevating the voices of people over institutions, we begin to create the foundational tiles for new mosaics of society."¹⁶ Many of these stories are told in our public spaces. Commemorations, memorials, dedications, public art, and monuments are symbols of our shared

memory of the past and collective futures. They are physical and symbolic markers of what is important, collective, and core to our identities. A central part of narrative change is ensuring that the stories we tell through our commemorations and monuments reflect our shared values by creating public land projects that reiterate those values and revisiting, contextualizing, and addressing inaccuracies or complexities of existing depictions.

There are many examples of projects that tell marginalized stories, including

the work of many [THRHT sites](#). The [Battle Creek Coalition for TRHT](#) in Michigan digitized [Memories from Hamlin](#), an oral history project that captured personal accounts of the rise and demise of The Bottoms, a mixed-race neighborhood that succumbed to gentrification and housing practices disproportionately impacting African Americans. Another oral history project, [Battle Creek Did Not Burn](#), explores local efforts during the civil rights movement. The Battle Creek TRHT site also started a Racial History Timeline Project to create a collaborative and more expansive account of Battle Creek's history.¹⁷ Community members contribute stories, historical facts, and pivotal events from all racial groups who have shaped local and national history. The timeline begins with the original peoples, the Native Nations, entering colonial America, then focuses on the Battle Creek area from the 1830s through the present. The project launched with the community on the National Day of Racial Healing 2020. [TRHT Los Angeles](#) was a partner on the 50th annual Manzanar Pilgrimage to learn about the active incarceration and unjust treatment of Japanese American citizens during World War II at the first concentration camp in the United States. These experiences and history have a lasting economic impact on Japanese American communities. They also held a Tongva History Walk downtown to look at the current and historical impacts of colonization in Los Angeles on the Indigenous peoples of California. Participants at the event learned about the Chinese massacre of 1871 and its ongoing economic impact on the Chinese American community. Through this deep dive into local history, people who work in city and county

governments, and in philanthropy, have begun to identify ways that their sectors have contributed to systemic racism.

Initiatives of Change USA (IoC), the coordinating organization for [TRHT in Richmond, Virginia](#), brought together people interested in uncovering stories about the legacy of enslavement in their community (whom they called "weavers"), with those who served as mentors, guides, and faculty ("architects"). The weavers created narratives of history, action, or healing to unveil and unpack their stories. People from different backgrounds convened to tell stories through visual art, movement and yoga, documentaries, books, and websites. Stories focused on food injustice, wellness, the local history of Black women's labor, personal perspectives on gentrification, and obesity and self-esteem among women of color. In Michigan, the [Kalamazoo Historical and Cultural Landscape Project](#) will develop and install interpretive sculptures, monuments, installations, and markers that tell social justice stories and strategies of insistence and resistance. These are intended to be useful tools to help teachers, artists, parents, tour guides, and visitors interpret specific narratives in cultural and historical contexts.

The National Park Service's (NPS) [Cultural Resources Office of Interpretation and Education](#) aims to tell all Americans' stories and promote cultural resources workforce development through youth program internships. The NPS has a number of [heritage initiatives](#) that touch on the historical experiences of those who have been underrepresented in traditional histories. During the Obama

administration, diversity of stories told and commemorated by the NPS increased.¹⁸ For example, President Obama used his authority under the American Antiquities Act of 1906 to establish the César E. Chávez National Monument in Keene, California to commemorate the important Latino leader, the United Farm Workers, and the civil rights movement. Obama has also protected Colorado's Chimney Rock National Monument, which was home to the ancestors of modern Pueblo Indians and is a sacred site to many tribes. And the president's first use of this same statutory authority was to protect Hampton, Virginia's Fort Monroe as a national monument. This location is important to African American history because it was a safe haven for escaped slaves during the Civil War and played a key role in the development of the legal basis for the Emancipation Proclamation.

The NPS has also tried to improve its telling of diverse stories through its National Historic Landmarks Program to "preserve and protect sites associated with LGBTQ history" because only three of the nearly 2,500 national landmarks do so. The NPS reports that from 2011 to 2012, 70% of new national landmarks "reflect and tell complex stories regarding the diversity of the American experience."¹⁹ The American Latino Heritage Fund was created and housed within the National Park Foundation in 2011 to "ensure that our national parks and historic sites preserve, reflect, and engage the diverse stories and communities of American Latinos throughout American History and for future generations."

A key component of the work of reimagining public spaces is not only

building the new, but also removing the old. In 2020, the [Virginia state legislature](#) passed a bill allowing individual localities to relocate, replace, or contextualize Confederate statues and monuments within their communities. This builds on earlier efforts by the Charlottesville City Council in 2017 to rename Lee and Jackson Parks because they created racial tension in the city, reflecting a history of slavery in Virginia. An initiative of the University of Virginia, [The Memory Project](#) builds on this work by investigating "public memory, memory conflict, and memory politics in the wake of the right-wing violence that came to Charlottesville in August 2017." According to the initiative, "As the events of 2017, the legacies of slavery in the United States, and the problematic history of Charlottesville and the University in particular raise a host of unique challenges for scholars, policy makers, and public officials, The Memory Project aims to demonstrate that Charlottesville and the University of Virginia are at the forefront of a growing trend toward a more objective examination of the past in the service of creating a more equitable and ethical future." This work continues to expand around Virginia.²⁰ Multiple cities are using art and public projects to tell the stories of marginalized communities. The [Smokey Hollow Commemoration](#) in Tallahassee, Florida is a tribute to the African American neighborhood that "was home to several hundred Black residents, as well as stores, cafes, churches, and a school. The neighborhood was eliminated by urban renewal in the 1960s and almost all remnants eradicated by the 1970s." In this way, commemorations are able to honor the memories of those lost to gentrification and other forms of displacement. In [Fuller, Tennessee](#) in

response to laws banning the removal of Confederate monuments, five new historical markers depicting the fuller story of the African American experience were placed on Franklin Square in October 2019. Over the past few years, states such as [Florida](#), [Louisiana](#), [Maryland](#), [Montana](#), [Kansas](#), [Kentucky](#), and others have also addressed the inaccuracies

or complexities of Confederate monuments. As of 2017, [Arkansas](#) has also stopped celebrating Robert E. Lee's birthday on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Though these changes are seen as progress by many, they have been met with mixed support from some individuals that wonder about their value in teaching parts of American history.

Creating curricula that are respectful, inclusive, and honor the diverse communities in which children attend school

Across the country, there are varying levels of state government influence on K-12 education. Notably, over the past several decades, "local school districts have gradually yielded policy-making discretion to state legislatures and bureaucracies. States' efforts to achieve [educational] equity and improve student and teacher performance have considerably diminished local controls over funding, standards, and curricular content."²¹ Reflecting this trend, state-level efforts have passed in Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island to require teaching Black history in K-12 public schools.²² Some school districts, including in [Philadelphia](#), have made a yearlong African American studies course a requirement for high school graduation. The [Texas Board of Education](#) approved a Mexican American studies course and offers a statewide elective African American studies course for 10-12th graders. In 2020, Colorado passed the "[Know](#)

[Justice No Peace](#)" resolution requiring the inclusion of Black, Indigenous, and Latino studies in the curriculum by 2022, providing professional development to teachers and administrators around discussing racially traumatic situations, and ensuring that feedback loops are in place to ensure student competency and cultural responsiveness. There are also smaller-scale pockets of innovation happening in areas like [Stockton, California](#), where a local school created an ethnic studies-based U.S. history after-school program focused on Mexican American, African American, and Filipino American histories and cultures.

PROMISE FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND RACIAL EQUITY

Because narratives are integral to structuring how we interpret events and facts, stories have been described as the “third dimension” of power.²³ Narrative change seeks to shift power by challenging dominant narratives and replacing them with more inclusive ones. Building collective power by changing the stories we tell about who we are and what is possible is a key first step in any large-scale change effort. As Rashad Robinson of Color of Change says, “our values and beliefs about the world are rooted in stories...narrative infrastructure helps us build power and achieve results at the level of a sector or society’s operating system, which then influences everything else that can and cannot happen in that system.”²⁴ The policy and practice opportunities put forth in this paper aim to help localities understand and dismantle harmful narratives, co-imagine and create new, positive narratives, and build the infrastructure and systems needed to create a world where we all thrive. To improve the health and well-being of all communities, we must challenge the deeply held cultural assumptions, values, and practices that reinforce racism and oppression.

Narratives can play a large role in perpetuating racial tensions.²⁵ A

FEASIBILITY

According to the Perception Institute, “media, entertainment, and other forms of popular culture play a significant role in shaping our perceptions of others. For many of us, popular culture is the primary way we learn about people who are

pervasive society-wide narrative depicting one group as subordinate to another can result in the minority group’s marginalization. Research by Banner, Kang, and Godsil finds that stereotype threat, or the pressure that people feel when they fear that their performance could confirm a negative stereotype about their group, “manifests itself in anxiety and distraction that interferes with intellectual functioning.”²⁶ A report by Braveman and Gottlieb states that “racial discrimination could harm the health of individuals of all socioeconomic levels by acting as a pervasive stressor in social interactions, even in the absence of anyone’s conscious intent to discriminate...living in a society with a strong legacy of racial discrimination could damage health through psychobiologic pathways, even without overtly discriminatory incidents.”²⁷

Research by Carr, Dweck, and Pauker indicates that teaching “that prejudice is a malleable narrative, able to be altered and attenuated, led white participants to express comparatively less anxiety and react more positively in an interracial interaction. Their finding...demonstrates the flexibility of narrative and the ability of the human mind to absorb new stories benefiting intergroup relations.”²⁸

different from us. The problem, though, is that many representations are based on cultural stereotypes, which tend to marginalize and caricature members of nondominant groups. Through these representations, we see a limited, and

distorted, view of others...the consistency of these representations reinforces stereotypes and makes them more readily available in our minds.”²⁹ Media makers are key partners in changing these harmful narratives, yet free speech protections make changing overarching public discourse and racial narratives an ongoing challenge. However, efforts by local leaders in the aforementioned areas are driving meaningful change and seeding counter-narratives. Positive and inclusive counter-narratives are more important as ever as there are increased incidences of well-funded and orchestrated campaigns against critical race theory, intersectionality, and other forms of racial and gender justice discourse. The African American Policy Forum found that as of April 30, 2021, 12 states have introduced some form of legislation prohibiting the teaching of racial justice and critical race theory in American history. Nine states have introduced some form of ban on teaching concepts related to gender justice and sex equality. Five states have introduced

bans specifically from teaching the New York Times’ 1619 Project, and 13 states have introduced equity ban bills targeting public schools (many of which also apply to universities and colleges).³⁰ They note, “This moment of racial reckoning has allowed us to tell a new story about this nation. And across the country, there is a groundswell of energy from educators who recognize that basic changes in curriculum and the way we tell our history are long overdue.” Efforts to change school curriculum may also be curtailed by state supremacy in education policy that prevents changes at the local level and inequitable cost ramifications as a result of differing local school budgets. The work ahead is not without its challenges, but the efforts of states and localities are critical to creative new narratives of possibility.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#)

[Diversity Data Kids](#)

[American Public Health Association: Declarations of Racism as a Public Health Crisis](#)

[Government Alliance on Race and Equity \(GARE\)](#)

[Living Cities: Narrative Change Working Group](#)

[Open Society Foundations: “Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity”](#)

[Esri: Racial Equity GIS Hub](#)

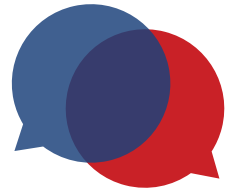
[Health Opportunity and Equity \(HOPE\) Initiative](#)

[Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#)

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RACIAL HEALING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



The Truth, Racial Healing, & Transformation (TRHT) framework defines “to heal” as to restore to wholeness, to repair damage, and to set right. Healing a societal racial divide requires acknowledging the wrongs of the past, while also addressing the consequences of those wrongs. Racial healing involves focusing on ways for all of us to heal from the wounds of the past, to build mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines that honor and value each person’s humanity, and to build trusting intergenerational and diverse community relationships that better reflect our common humanity. Racial healing is about building relationships, connecting people, and expanding the circles of engagement needed for overcoming racial hierarchy and building political will. It is a precursor to meaningful and sustainable policy change.

One of the [core principles](#) of our work is to bring people together and bridge divides. According to Dr. Shawn Ginwright, professor of Africana Studies at San Francisco State University, “healing-centered engagement uses culture as a way to ground people in a solid sense of meaning, self-perception, and purpose. This process highlights the intersectional nature of identity and highlights the ways in which culture offers a shared experience, community and sense of belonging. ...Healing-centered engagement embraces a holistic view of well-being that includes spiritual domains of health. This goes beyond viewing healing only from the lens of mental health, and incorporates culturally grounded rituals, and activities to restore well-being.”¹

A key component of this process is building empathy and shared understanding. Research shows that intergroup dialogue can reduce prejudice and increase compassion and capacity for perspective-taking and empathy. In 1954, Gordon Allport created the intergroup contact theory, which aims to bring ingroups and outgroups together under circumstances that build tolerance and mutual respect. In a pair of studies, a group of Italian researchers led by social psychologist Dora Capozza repeatedly found that positive contact was linked with greater outgroup humanization.² Authentic connection is key to treating outgroups with respect and dignity and encourages us to take other people’s voices seriously, value them, and make

them feel understood. The researchers suggested a possible process at play: Participants may have reclassified the “us” and “them” of ingroup and outgroup into a larger “we.” Research done by Williams and Cooper found that the racial gap in empathetic brain activity can be reduced when people are instructed to focus on an individual’s suffering instead of their racial background (individuation), when people are on the same team with members of a racial outgroup, and when they are among persons who have experienced greater inter-racial interaction in their socialization.³

Communities are undertaking a variety of activities to advance racial healing, ranging from new practices, such as community racial healing circles, to new policies, such as making implicit bias training a requirement for

professional licensure. In some cases, cities or jurisdictions allocate funding to institutionalize racial healing processes, raising them to the level of policies. There are several policy and practice categories that are important steps on a continuum of racial healing, including:

- Resolutions, dialogue models, racial healing circles, and restorative justice practices aimed at understanding historical harms and repairing relationships.
- Training and capacity-building for leaders, practitioners, educators, and service providers around overcoming bias and healing.
- Local truth commissions that promote racial healing, public apologies, and commitments to redress by localities for their role in slavery and/or advancing systemic racism.

KEY POLICY AND PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Examples follow of these practices and policies in action. The examples were selected to show how successful racial healing creates safe, substantive, and positive spaces for people to bridge

differences, gives people space for breaking down stereotypes, connects people from different backgrounds, and helps people find common ground and identify shared values.

Resolutions, dialogue models, racial healing circles, and restorative justice practices aimed at understanding historical harms and repairing relationships

There is an emerging consensus across multiple caregiving and educational disciplines that safe spaces, affirmation, agency, and respectful engagements reduce stressful dynamics and improve positive outcomes. These core ideas are woven into many of the racial healing, trauma-informed, and restorative practices. Resolutions and other legislation can play a powerful role in creating new healing-based

relationships by interrupting negative patterns of engagement that traumatize communities. Research shows a strong relationship between exposures to traumas such as extreme economic hardship, a parent serving time in jail, or the death of a loved one, and the incidence of mental and physical health issues. Individuals with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are at an especially high risk for negative health

outcomes.⁴ Baltimore City officials are hoping to change this with the [Elijah Cummings Healing City Act](#), which creates a citywide task force committed to ensuring that staff working in agencies that deliver services to children and families are trauma responsive. This legislation makes Baltimore the first city to embrace trauma-informed care through legislation.

Providing trauma-informed care in schools, courts, and other settings that family interface with has been shown to have positive effects. In Walla Walla, Washington, Lincoln Alternative High School, the first trauma-informed high school in the country, has seen positive outcomes⁵ for its students. Within the first year of implementation of its model, the graduation rate increased by nearly 30% and suspensions decreased by almost 85%.

The school's success has led to the adoption of trauma-informed practices in the Walla Walla health department's division of children and family services and the police department. This work has been occurring for more than a decade. The trauma-informed Self-Healing Community Model implemented in Cowlitz County, Washington saw high school dropout rates decrease by 47%. It's estimated that the 15-year implementation of the Self-Healing Community Model saved \$3.4 million per year from reductions in caseload costs in child welfare, juvenile justice, and public medical costs associated with births to teen mothers.⁶

Safe Babies Court Teams bring together an interdisciplinary and cross-sector group of professionals to support families and improve outcomes for infants and toddlers in foster care at risk of removal. In San Diego, an evaluation found that

the kids whose cases were heard before trauma-informed judges in these Safe Babies courts reached permanency in their placements two to three times faster, left foster care a year earlier on average, and ended up with family more often.⁷

Talking circles, peacemaking circles, or healing circles, as they are variously called, are deeply rooted in the traditional practices of North American Indigenous peoples. Today, they are used to foster respect, model good listening skills, settle disputes, resolve conflicts, and build self-esteem.⁸ They are a key element of TRHT. Several TRHT sites have used racial healing circles and related practices:⁹

- The [First Alaskans Institute \(FAI\)](#), the coordinating organization for the Alaska TRHT site, works to create a space for truths to be told and to make sure Native people and people of color receive justice and equity. FAI co-created the Alaska Native Dialogues on Racial Equity project, which has hosted dialogues with more than 15,000 people to date from a broad community spectrum. The dialogues ask people to talk candidly about the past and to propose what needs to happen from a social, institutional, and system perspective so that FAI can identify solutions. Out of these efforts grew a call for intergenerational healing and for a truth and reconciliation process in the state of Alaska.
- [TRHT Greater Chicago](#) has trained more than 100 community members from various racial and cultural backgrounds to host racial healing circles. Circles have taken place in an array of neighborhoods throughout the city and select areas of surrounding Cook County.

The healing circles are a vehicle for development and anti-poverty projects. The goal is to build and strengthen relationships and trust among community members, policymakers, and other institutions in support of transformation projects across the city and to ensure that community engagement and consultation are critical to any development project that happens in neighborhoods.

- The [Foundation for Louisiana](#), the coordinating organization for TRHT New Orleans, hosts dialogues about mindfulness, honoring ancestors, and supporting initiatives that promote people coming together to talk about race and racism. There is now a collective of people interested in making healing services, rituals, and practices accessible to the broader New Orleans community.¹
- [One Love Global](#), the TRHT partner in Lansing, Michigan, is holding community healing circles. Their first healing circles on the National Day of Racial Healing in January 2020 had over 100 attendees. Each group was asked to reconvene, and they have since held virtual healing spaces throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They also created learning communities with webinars about [healing racial violence and oppression](#), and newsletters on [art and activism for racial justice and healing](#) and [racism as a social determinant of health and healing](#).
- In response to the racial justice demonstrations and protests that occurred in the spring and summer of 2020, in Michigan, TRHT Kalamazoo [called on local officials to take a number of actions](#) to address policing in the city. [TRHT Kalamazoo](#) also launched a virtual healing project,

racial healing circles, and the Affinity Healing Series. This series creates safe spaces within various identity groups to build relationships, learn about personal healing practices, and discuss critical issues and visions for what people would like to see in the community.

Other local efforts like those in Austin, Texas ([Austin Health Commons](#)); Harrisonburg, Virginia ([Coming to the Table](#)); and Asheville, North Carolina (Office of Equity) have engaged hundreds of community members in healing circles. Localities such as Spokane, Washington, and its [Excelerate Success](#) initiative led by the local United Way, have introduced affinity groups and started caucusing to address potential harm to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals during multiracial and multiethnic trainings or convenings on how racism operates. Their BIPOC Affinity Group and the Male-Identified BIPOC Affinity Group are spaces that allows BIPOC to hold each other in solidarity during difficult times. In these spaces participants are allowed to grieve, to be angry, to experience joy, and to be heard. Participants also address internalized and horizontal oppression. In a complementary white accountability space, white people explicitly and intentionally work on developing understanding of whiteness in a space where their learning and unlearning will not burden or harm BIPOC. Excelerate Success views affinity groups and caucusing as a proactive anti-racism and anti-oppression tool that reduces harm to BIPOC, promotes healing, decenters whiteness and its toxic effects, and centers BIPOC.

The concept of restorative justice originally focused on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. Today, restorative justice practices are increasingly used in schools to empower students to resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups. The idea is to bring students together in peer-mediated small groups to talk, ask questions, and air their grievances with the goal of relationship-building, repairing harm, and creating more equitable environments. A 2015 study found that the more teachers immersed themselves in restorative practices, the better students rated their relationships with these teachers. The strong relationships in turn linked

to a greater sense of respect between teachers and students and fewer disciplinary referrals.¹⁰

To promote racial healing, restorative justice models and practices are being used in several school districts, including in [Baltimore](#), [Chicago](#), [Denver](#); [Fairfax County, Virginia](#); [Milwaukee](#); [Rochester, New York](#); and in multiple [California](#) schools. As a result of this work, school districts have seen reductions in suspensions and truancy rates. Still, it is important for districts to allocate appropriate resources and supports for implementation and offer alternative methods for accountability to ensure students and teachers feel safe.¹¹

Training and capacity-building for leaders, practitioners, educators, and service providers around overcoming bias and healing

Implicit bias describes the automatic association people make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups. There is empirical evidence that training programs can mend the harm created by these stereotypes.¹²

In Michigan, [Executive Directive 2020-7](#) directs the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs in Lansing to develop rules that will require implicit bias training as part of the knowledge and skills necessary for licensure, registration, and renewal of licenses and registrations of health professionals in Michigan. In Montgomery County, Maryland, the [Racial Equity and Social Justice Act](#) mandates racial equity training for more than 8,000 full-time government employees. A similar effort is taking place in Greensboro, North Carolina, where the Racial Equity Institute is hosting anti-racism trainings with government officials.

[In Fort Wayne, Indiana](#), the circuit and superior courts are providing implicit bias training to judges, magistrates, and staff from all divisions of the courts, the clerk of the courts, public defenders, guardians ad litem, Court Appointed Special Advocate staff, probation officers, and others in response to Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush's call for Indiana Courts to address bias and racial disparities. In California, Trauma Transformed hosted more than 300 regional, county, and organizational leaders for a day long session with Dr. Kenneth Hardy, professor of family therapy at Drexel University in Philadelphia, to explore their legacies and subsequent wounds of oppression, and skills and commitments leaders can take to enact practices and policies that heal more and harm less. Elsewhere, multiple jurisdictions, including Baltimore, Boston, and [New Orleans](#), have

implemented training for police officers using the Ethical Policing is Courageous (EPIC) program, which draws on the science of active bystandership and peer intervention to de-escalate incidents and prevent misconduct.

Local policies (such as those in the [Jefferson County Public Schools](#) in Kentucky and New York City Public Schools) are supporting implicit bias training in schools and robust training of educators in culturally competent classroom management. The goal is to improve disparities in academic outcomes and disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion among students of color, which reflects a systemic bias in the educational system.

In 2019, [CBS News](#) interviewed 155 police departments across the country on their implicit bias training. Sixty-nine percent had implicit racial bias training and 57% of those departments said it was added in the five years

since Michael Brown was killed by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, sparking months of protests nationwide. Of the departments that reported having implicit bias training, 90% have mandatory training. The breadth of training has since expanded. [The Spokane Police Department in Washington](#) underwent mandatory training, resulting in “high rates of community satisfaction with police encounters. Of those respondents who interacted with officers, 81% were satisfied with how the officer treated them, 82% felt the officer treated them fairly, and 82% felt the officer was respectful.” In 2018, citizen complaints decreased by 68%. Training on implicit bias is an important first, but not final, step in the process. It is imperative that practitioners across sectors are trained to be interveners in the system so that they can spot policies, practices, and procedures that are inequitable and move to change them.

Local truth commissions that promote racial healing

Local truth commissions are official bodies tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing by a government in the hope of resolving and atoning for historical conflict and harm.

In North Carolina, the [Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), the first such U.S. commission, was followed by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 and the [Byrd Foundation for Racial Healing](#), which aims to promote racial healing, fight hate crimes of any kind, and facilitate widespread public dialogue on racial healing through educational programs. These efforts have expanded over

the last few years in light of increased attention to police brutality and racism.

[District attorneys in Boston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco](#) have partnered with the Grassroots Law Project to launch “Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation” efforts. Similar efforts are happening in [Charleston, South Carolina](#), [Metropolitan Detroit](#), and [Long Beach, California](#), as well as other cities including Chicago, New Orleans, New York City, and Washington, D.C., through the [Black Women’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#). There are efforts taking place between Tribal nations and the states with which

they share land, such as the [Wabanaki Tribes and the state of Maine](#). Truth commissions are also being established on college campuses. Examples include [Davidson College's Commission on Race](#)

and Slavery, [Binghamton University's Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), and [Georgetown University's Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation work](#).

Acknowledgement, public apologies, and commitments to redress by localities for their role in slavery and/or advancing systemic racism

Cities are formalizing their commitment to racial healing through resolutions. [Evanston, Illinois](#) passed a resolution acknowledging the city's history of racially motivated policies and practices and creating atonement. These include committing to eradicating the effects of systemically racist past practices from city government and city-affiliated organizations by participating in racial equity training and joining the Government Alliance for Racial Equity, a national network of government agencies working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. This resolution led to a public commitment to [reparations](#) and a second [resolution](#) in November 2019 to establish a \$10 million

reparations fund utilizing tax revenue collected from sales of recreational cannabis. The state has also created "[Healing Illinois](#)," a racial healing initiative of the Illinois Department of Human Services, in partnership with The Chicago Community Trust, designed to distribute \$4.5 million in grants to organizations across the state to begin, or continue, the work of racial healing.

Public apologies for wrongdoing have occurred in places as diverse as [Loudoun County Public Schools](#) in Virginia and the city councils of [Asheville, North Carolina](#); [Charleston, South Carolina](#); [Tampa, Florida](#); and [Tulsa, Oklahoma](#).

EVIDENCE FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND RACIAL EQUITY

Dialogue models, racial healing circles, restorative justice practices, and local truth commissions give people an opportunity to share stories and understand the way that policies, practices, and actions have shaped their current relationships and well-being. Although narratives have the power to trap us in hopelessness, they can also be used to heal. As Dr. Lewis Mehl-Madrona notes, clinical psychologists have successfully used narrative medicine to treat a variety of mental health disorders.¹³

Capital Public Radio in Sacramento, California's experience with "story circles" provides promising evidence for the effectiveness of racial healing circles. The six story circles, which were part of a "Place and Privilege" community engagement initiative, were designed to generate community conversations about the housing affordability crisis in Sacramento, create content that would inject new information and diverse community perspectives into these conversations, and spark meaningful, real-world change. Participants included a mix

of homeowners, developers, affordable housing advocates, and unhoused community members. Research from the story circles found that they were particularly effective in increasing the audience's empathy and intent to take action to counter homelessness. More than 80% of participants said they felt the event increased their empathy for others, which is associated with enhanced connection.¹⁴

In Seattle, the public radio station KUOW held intergroup sessions over a three-month period with a wide range of community residents. Their research revealed a positive relationship between attitude and empathy, and a negative relationship between nervousness to have the conversation and attitudes and empathy. Overall, they found that even when attitudes were somewhat low coming into an interaction, afterward there was a positive attitude change, even three months post-interaction.¹⁵

In partnership with BECOME: Center for Community Engagement and Social Change, the American Library Association evaluated a pilot TRHT project across 25 sites (libraries and partner organizations) to explore areas for improvement and determine the partnership's impact on racial healing, supporting narrative change of youth participants and building capacity within the sites to implement the program. The relevant finding was that youth participants in the program experienced moments where they saw the capacity for narrative change in their own lives as well as opportunities for building intersectional equity in their schools and communities. Racial healing circles also had the consequence of challenging adults' preconceptions about "high-need" youth and deepening their understanding of them.¹⁶

In Maine, Dr. Lewis Mehl-Madrona introduced talking circles into 10 primary health care clinics. He found that participating in at least four talking circles (n=415) [resulted](#) in a statistically significant improvement in reported symptoms and overall quality of life.

Research on public apologies conducted by Blatz, Schumann, and Ross suggests that a comprehensive apology that expresses remorse, acceptance of responsibility, admission of injustice, acknowledgement of harm and/or victim suffering, forbearance, or promises to behave better in the future, and offers of repair can serve important psychological needs when included in government apologies for historical injustices.¹⁷ A statement of remorse indicates that a government believes that an apology is warranted and cares about the victims of harm. Their research finds that "an admission of injustice assures the victimized group that the current government upholds the moral principles that were violated and is committed to upholding a legitimate and just social system. By acknowledging harm, a government validates the victims' pain and corroborates their suffering for outsiders. A promise of forbearance can work to restore trust between groups and indicates that the government values the victims and their group and is willing to work to keep them safe. Finally, by offering repair, governments demonstrate the sincerity of their apology."

FEASIBILITY

The experience in Greensboro, North Carolina, which in 2004 organized the first U.S. truth and reconciliation commission, illustrates some of the challenges of this work. The commission grew out of the 1979 Greensboro Massacre, in which five people were killed during an anti-Ku Klux Klan protest in a local housing project. The commission's mission was to bridge the "deep divides of distrust and skepticism" that appeared to run through the city. But later its report was accused of deepening those divides. Research on the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that truth commissions are useful for assembling comprehensive narratives, giving voice to people who have not previously had a public platform, and using historical inquiry to set concrete goals for public agencies to redress past wrongs. Though not as useful for true reconciliation, "facts can serve as building blocks for awareness, evidence in criminal trials, or talking points in debates about reparations."¹⁸

An exhaustive journalistic analysis identified an important lesson from the experience, namely that to be successful, commissions must "agree about whose actions and experiences, whose truth, should be part of a new historical record. They must share

a view of what a healed community would look like. And they must have a willingness to move beyond the short-term conflict and pain that uncovering truth often triggers."¹⁹ It is not inevitable that this common ground will be established. Similar lessons likely apply to implicit bias training and restorative justice practices in schools, as coverage of implicit bias training finds that such training can be contentious,²⁰ and restorative justice models do not have equally positive effects on all students by race.²¹ These practices cannot exist in a vacuum and must be accompanied by a shift in cultures and systems that created unequal conditions. These large-scale shifts require buy-in from all levels to succeed.

Although this work is often difficult, the many examples highlighted throughout this brief illustrate that this work is possible and is happening in both progressive and more conservative communities across the country. Various cities are demonstrating that commissions, implicit bias training, and restorative justice circles can use historical inquiry to set concrete goals for public agencies to redress past wrongs. In addition, commissions have demonstrated their ability to give voice to citizens who have never before had a public platform.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[America's Peacemakers: The Community Relations Service and Civil Rights](#)

[Illinois Department of Human Services and the Chicago Community Trust: Healing Illinois](#)

[W.K. Kellogg Foundation: "Restoring to Wholeness: Racial Healing for Ourselves, Our Relationships and Our Communities"](#)

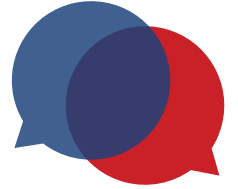
[Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Community Collaboration Sites](#)

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SEPARATION



The belief in a hierarchy of human value is sustained by keeping people apart. In cutting off Indigenous people from their rights to self-governance and controlling access to such basic resources as food and water, colonization is the original form of separation, and it serves to benefit white society. Within the Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) framework, separation is defined as the division of groups based on a particular characteristic, including race and/or socioeconomic status. It is fostered by historic and present-day land use and development decisions that perpetuate racial inequities, such as segregation, colonization, and isolation, which lead to concentrated poverty and limit access to opportunity.

In fact, segregation has been deemed a form of “opportunity hoarding,” conferring benefits of homeownership, high-quality schools, and access to political power and other resources to white people. The effects are immense. It is estimated that 12% of children nationwide (8.5 million) live in areas of concentrated poverty. The concentrated poverty rate for Black and Indigenous children is 28% (for each) compared to just 4% for white children. These neighborhoods usually lack healthy food options and quality health care and have poorly performing public schools and higher rates of environmental exposures, all of which put Black and Indigenous children on a trajectory of poor health and limited opportunity across the lifespan and for generations.

In the United States, separation has been codified into law at the federal, state, and local levels through both overtly racist practices such as redlining and school segregation, and covertly racist policies such as exclusionary zoning, the interstate highway system (which literally divided majority-Black neighborhoods in half), and school redistricting. The intent of these policies is also reinforced by habits and norms that were and are so pervasive that separation persists even though many discriminatory laws have been deemed illegal. In *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein writes, “if it becomes a community norm for whites to flee a neighborhood where African Americans were settling, this norm can be as powerful as if it were written into law.”

Three primary areas that have been used to reinforce separation by race and ethnicity are housing, transportation, and education. Therefore, policies to address separation should ensure equitable access to these determinants and other resources essential for good health and racial equity.

Healing Through Policy elevates the following policy options for addressing separation:

- Zoning innovation for health and equity.
- Displacement and eviction protections to preserve the right to housing.
- Equitable transportation and

planning to improve access to opportunity.

- School integration to promote social justice and social mobility.

It is also recognized that there is a broad range of environmental justice concerns that both perpetuate separation and exacerbate inequities within and between communities. While those specific environmental justice policies are beyond the current scope of *Healing Through Policy*, there is acknowledgement that the policy options listed below should incorporate principles of environmental justice and aim to reduce exposures to environmental hazards among communities of color.

KEY POLICY AND PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Zoning innovation for health and equity

Land-use policies have contributed to a great divide in our country, producing sprawling places, including neighborhoods and schools, that are marked by a stark separation of both uses and people. Zoning is the most common form of land-use regulation. The history of zoning laws to separate people by race dates to the early 20th century. In 1910, Baltimore adopted the first zoning laws that were openly drawn to keep African Americans and whites separated by laws that restricted Black residents to certain blocks. Explaining the policy, Baltimore's (then) mayor stated, "Blacks should be quarantined in isolated slums in order to reduce the incidence of civil disturbance, to prevent the spread of communicable disease into the nearby white neighborhoods, and to protect property values among

the white majority." Soon after, there was a surge in the employment of municipal zoning strategies to enforce separation by race and class. Over the next 20 years, the number of cities with zoning ordinances grew exponentially — from eight in 1916 to 1,246 in 1936.

After racial restrictive covenants were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948, covert practices followed. Many communities began to adopt "economic-based" zoning laws that required minimum lot sizes and the exclusive construction of single-family homes. Since Black families were largely prevented from owning homes because of affordability concerns or discriminatory lending practices, this effectively created all-white neighborhoods. These "exclusionary

zoning” policies are still in effect in many neighborhoods. Exclusionary zoning ordinances contributed to patterns of pervasive racial segregation that characterize American neighborhoods today.

Zoning can and is being used as a creative tool for localities to address systemic inequities caused by separation.

Policy Examples

Examples of zoning innovation include:

- *Up-zoning; removing restrictions on single-family zoning/minimum lot sizes/parking requirements:* Up-zoning refers to the lifting of common restrictions that reserve cities’ land exclusively for only one house per one large lot to allow for the development of more affordable housing options. Further, up-zoning also includes policies that unbundle housing and parking costs by eliminating parking minimum requirements for housing development sites or providing incentives to reduce parking construction in transit-rich areas. Reducing or eliminating these costly requirements around transit stops in walkable neighborhoods or on properties with affordable housing can improve housing affordability. Minnesota’s comprehensive plan eliminates single-family zoning. This city-wide zoning reform is a direct effort to confront its history of redlining and segregation. In Miami, a citywide form-based code makes gentle density and missing middle-income housing more economically viable by eliminating the parking requirements attached

to housing development in urban neighborhoods. Seattle requires developers to unbundle parking costs from housing costs so that only those who need parking are required to pay. Seattle’s policy also allows denser construction in and around 27 neighborhood hubs while requiring developers in those areas to contribute to affordable housing by including low-income apartments in their buildings or by paying fees.

- *Inclusionary zoning (IZ):* This type of zoning requires or encourages the creation of affordable housing units when market-rate housing is developed, with the primary goal of providing opportunities for families at all income levels to move to low-poverty areas. IZ is intended to create affordable, below-market housing that would otherwise not be created by private developers. There are different types of IZ policies: Voluntary IZ policies utilize financial incentives such as expedited permitting and density bonuses for proposed projects that include affordable units. Mandatory IZ policies require affordable units to be included in all proposed projects covered by the policy. Mandatory IZ policies may also include financial incentives to new developments to offset the anticipated revenue lost by including affordable units.

There are 866 IZ housing policies located in 25 states and Washington, D.C., in large cities like New York City and San Francisco, in suburban areas such as Montgomery County, Maryland, and in rural areas like North Elba, New York. It must be acknowledged that IZ policies may be politically difficult in some

jurisdictions. In fact, six states expressly preempt mandatory IZ laws: Arizona, Indiana, Kansas, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. In addition, Virginia has limits on mandatory IZ and Colorado prohibits mandatory IZ rental laws (mandatory homeownership IZ laws are permitted). Another challenge with IZ policies is that many of them do not target very low-income households. Over half (53%) of IZ policies require units to be affordable to households with incomes between 51% and 80% of the local area median income (AMI); only 2% of programs target households with incomes below 50% of AMI.

- *Accessory dwelling units (ADUs):* Also referred to as “in-law suites” or “granny flats,” ADUs are smaller, independent units on the same lot as a single-family home, sometimes even an extension or a reworking of the home itself. ADUs can be a more approachable means of increasing affordable housing units in existing neighborhoods since they can be designed to blend in with the surrounding architecture, maintaining compatibility with established neighborhoods and preserving community character.

Furthermore, since ADUs can be connected to the existing utilities of a primary dwelling, there is no need to develop new infrastructure. Allowing ADUs facilitates efficient use of existing housing, helps meet the demand for housing, and offers an alternative to major zoning changes that can significantly alter neighborhoods. ADUs have the potential to increase the number and variety of housing choices in single-

family zones, improve affordability, and decrease potential economic displacement.

Many cities across the United States are easing restrictions on ADUs to increase affordable housing options. In 2016, Seattle adopted an ordinance removing barriers to creating attached and detached ADUs. The new rules removed the requirement that homeowners in single-family zones live onsite, allowing ADUs to be built on rental properties. They also stopped requiring an off-street parking spot for each ADU, allowing homeowners without off-street parking to rent out ADUs, and eased size restrictions.

Los Angeles won a \$1 million grant through the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Mayors Challenge to fund a program that will pair homeless residents with homeowners who have space on their properties for an ADU. Austin, Texas approved a series of reforms that accelerated the number of permits for ADUs as part of its larger efforts to improve affordability. Many cities in Northern California, including Berkeley, Oakland, and Redwood City, along with others nationwide (including Honolulu; Portland, Oregon; and Cambridge, Massachusetts) have already loosened restrictions on ADUs, and others are considering similar rule changes.

Given the longstanding race-based differences in homeownership rates and household incomes, there may be some inherent equity issues with ADUs that must be considered and addressed. One racial equity analysis of ADUs in Seattle found that

white households are significantly more likely to own a single-family home and have the financial resources needed to add an ADU to their property. ADUs support affordability in an informal sense because renting an ADU tends to be affordable to more households than renting a single-family house. This is likely due to the smaller size and lack of additional land costs to create an ADU. However, high construction costs mean that most households able to create an ADU are disproportionately wealthy or have access to substantial equity in their home. Further, though ADU rents may be lower than renting a single-family home, they are not low enough to provide housing that is affordable to households with lower incomes.

- *Zoning for food justice:* The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that 54.4 million Americans live in low-income areas with poor access to healthy food. Zoning may also be used to address food apartheid and provide healthy, affordable food options. For example, localities may ease or create exceptions to zoning requirements to support and incentivize healthy retail. Philadelphia relaxes zoning height, floor area, density, and parking requirements for new fresh food markets that meet certain accessibility and siting requirements. Birmingham, Alabama updated its zoning laws to help increase healthy food retail in the city by creating a Healthy Food Overlay District. Grocery stores in and within a half mile of the Healthy Food Overlay District enjoy reduced parking requirements and larger floor area

allowances.

- In Tribal communities, land use and zoning policies have also made it more difficult, and in some cases criminal, to exercise traditional food practices, including the cultivation of Indigenous foods, hunting, and fishing. For these communities, food justice is in the form of food sovereignty, which must be facilitated through honoring treaty rights, including hunting and fishing rights, and upholding policies that ensure access to and safety of traditional foods.

Evidence for Improving Health and Racial Equity

As illustrated above, there are many ways that zoning can be used to reduce separation and improve health and racial equity by addressing a few key determinants of health and equity. Thoughtful equity-informed zoning policies can promote the health, safety, and quality of life for communities, and bolster economic opportunity and equity by increasing availability of affordable housing, building wealth through homeownership, and creating or preserving mixed-income neighborhoods.

For example, IZ can increase access to quality affordable housing and decrease health disparities, and may increase neighborhood socioeconomic diversity. Also, while research on the impact of IZ policies on economic integration is limited, it suggests that IZ generally improves economic integration and provides low-income residents access to high-opportunity neighborhoods.

A RAND Corporation study of 11 cities across the country found that over

three-quarters of affordable housing units developed through IZ policies were in low-poverty neighborhoods that had higher rates of employment and college attainment. IZ may also increase economic opportunity by improving educational outcomes for children. One study found that elementary school students in IZ-produced housing assigned to low-poverty schools performed better in reading and math than students in public housing assigned to moderate-poverty elementary schools. Additionally, while IZ homeownership programs typically target a population with generally higher income than renters, recent analyses suggest that IZ policies can increase economic opportunity through access to home equity for low-income households.

A study of units built in Montgomery County, Maryland and in Suffolk County, New York found that on average, tracts where IZ units were built became more racially integrated than neighborhoods without IZ units.

ADUs can support aging in place, which helps improve the health and well-being of older adults through a greater sense of autonomy, connection to family and social networks, and affordable living situations. This latter point is especially important for older adults of color who are more likely to live on a lower fixed income and in poverty. ADUs can also encourage greater age diversity within a neighborhood of young adults and senior citizens.

Displacement and eviction protections to preserve the right to housing

An estimated 43.1 million Americans rent their homes — the highest rental rate in the last 50 years. As a group, renters are at higher risk for housing-related health problems because they have fewer resources and/or they face compounding health burdens, which can be exacerbated by unsafe, unstable, or unaffordable housing. Typically, renter households have lower incomes than homeowners and have very little savings or wealth. Though most renter households are white, people of color are over-represented as a group. Black and Latinx households are twice as likely as white households to rent their homes. In 2016, 58% of Black household heads and 54% of Hispanic household heads were renters, compared with 28% of white household heads.

over age 50 or are families with children. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, one study estimated that 1 in 5 renters struggled or were unable to pay their rent, and that 3.7 million Americans are evicted every year. At the end of 2020, an estimated 40 million renters were at risk of eviction, 80% of them being Black or Latinx. While emergency measures have provided temporary relief from eviction for some, more long-term strategies are needed to protect renters' right to housing.

Also, two-thirds of renters are either

Policy Examples

Keeping people housed must be a key strategy for advancing racial equity. This is especially important for those who are most vulnerable and in need of a safety net.

- *Right to return or preference policy:* These policies are an effort to address the harmful impacts of gentrification by giving priority placement to residents who were displaced, are at risk of displacement, or who are descendants of households that were displaced. Portland, Oregon's N/NE Preference Policy gives priority placement to housing applicants affected by urban renewal in North and Northeast Portland. While older policies in New York City and Oakland and San Francisco, California have all tried to give residents of gentrifying areas preference when a subsidized apartment building becomes available in their neighborhood, no city gave preference to residents living outside a neighborhood based on their parents or grandparents having lived there until Portland's measure. Austin, Texas has piloted a similar policy.
Portland's preference policy is a strong example of an anti-gentrification and displacement policy that also seeks to redress past harms. The city has successfully offered over 100 units to individuals who were displaced. It has also passed an IZ ordinance that allows for expansion of the preference policy into other districts.
- *Right to counsel:* Having the assistance of a lawyer in housing court can mean the difference between staying

in one's home or losing it. A 2017 Legal Services Corporation report found that 86% of all civil legal problems for low-income people nationwide receive insufficient or no legal help. Right to counsel laws seek to redress the imbalance of power between tenants and landlords in housing court. First enacted in New York City, the legislation requires that, subject to appropriation, the city provide access to legal representation to all eligible tenants by 2022. In the program's first year (FY 2018), legal representation, advice, and assistance were provided to 33,000 households, including 26,000 facing eviction proceedings, and ultimately more than 87,000 city residents benefitted. Overall, nine cities have established right to counsel for housing discrimination, and seven have for evictions.

In 2018, San Francisco voters approved a ballot measure guaranteeing all tenants a right to counsel in eviction proceedings. Washington, D.C.'s Expanding Access to Justice Act requires the DC Bar Foundation to provide representation in "certain civil cases" to people under a set income threshold. The Philadelphia City Council appropriated a half million dollars to give low-income renters legal representation in housing cases. Other jurisdictions that have considered or piloted this approach include Hennepin County, Minnesota; Los Angeles; and Newark, New Jersey. Cleveland is exploring how to guarantee legal counsel for indigent tenants in eviction cases and studying the potential impact of a right to counsel on the community.

- *Just cause eviction:* Just cause eviction is a form of tenant protection designed to prevent arbitrary, retaliatory, or discriminatory evictions by establishing that landlords can evict renters only for specific reasons such as failure to pay rent. Oakland, California passed the Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance in 2002, which includes 11 legally defined “just causes.” In 2017, San Jose, California enacted the Tenant Protection Ordinance implementing just cause protections. The protections, which apply to all rental units, impact 450,000 renters citywide. Other jurisdictions with just cause eviction policies include Baltimore; Boulder, Colorado; Cleveland; Newark, New Jersey; New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

Promise for Improving Health and Racial Equity

Preserving the right to housing, especially for renters, impacts both health and racial equity by preventing housing instability, which is associated with a range of negative health effects. These include increased physical and mental health issues, and disconnection from social networks and health-promoting resources such as health care and healthy food options. Children experiencing housing instability are

more likely to experience hunger, chronic absenteeism, and behavior challenges that lead to disciplinary actions, all of which increase their likelihood of underperforming and not graduating from high school — a significant predictor of poor health across the lifespan.

The proposed policies also attempt to protect renters from susceptibility to displacement due to dramatic increases in market value of rentals caused by gentrification. Studies have found that populations displaced by gentrification have shorter life expectancies and are more likely to report poor/fair health, higher rates of preterm birth, and higher incidence of chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Mental health outcomes, including an increased risk of psychological stress levels and depression, have also been demonstrated among displaced populations. Displacement and eviction protection policies have been criticized for being helpful for individual households but not addressing systemic issues such as the structural racism baked into common housing and finance practices. These policy options should be applied in concert with broader equitable zoning, housing, and development strategies.

Equitable transportation and planning to improve access to opportunity

Transportation is a key determinant of health. It can facilitate or limit one’s ability to access jobs, education, healthy food, social engagements, faith-based institutions, and health care. The legacy of the transportation system in the

United States reflects its roots in racism designed to segregate communities.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 resulted in an unprecedented amount of investment in the transportation

infrastructure of the country. However, the racism and racial bias that existed at the time drove how and where these dollars were used. This allowed policymakers, engineers, planners, and private businesses to use racist practices to destroy neighborhoods by using highways to literally divide neighborhoods in half; increase reliance on personal automobiles to get jobs, goods, and services; support construction and investment in white suburbs; and concurrently divest in all-Black urban neighborhoods.

In the 21st century, as the public health community began to recognize and actively promote the importance of neighborhood conditions for health, there was a corresponding shift in preference for more walkable communities and a resurgence of people returning to cities. The resulting rise in living expenses in cities displaced lower-income and lower-wealth families. And now, in many large cities, higher-income white residents have the political and social capital to drive decision-making that results in transportation and development projects being concentrated in wealthier and whiter parts of urban areas. In addition to displacement, the result is widening disparities in access and opportunity for remaining residents.

Policy Examples

To reduce these inequities, transportation and planning policies and practices must embed considerations of equity at all levels and be driven by the needs and priorities of impacted communities.

- *Incorporation of equity goals and equity-driven processes into the fabric of agency planning and policy*

decisions: This could include explicit racial equity goals and objectives in comprehensive plans and/or requiring considerations of racial equity in transportation and planning decisions, such as through equity impact assessments or other racial equity tools. Such plans should also incorporate principles of environmental justice and include robust provisions for community engagement, with ongoing opportunities for involvement at all levels of project planning and implementation.

Akron, Ohio's new Office of Integrated Development launched a five-year strategic framework listing equity as a core value for planning and established a goal of a "more equitable Akron." The 2050 transportation plan for Washoe County, Nevada's Regional Transportation Commission outlines a path toward "promoting equity and environmental justice." In May 2015, Seattle passed a resolution making race and social equity a foundational core value for the city's Comprehensive Plan. The resolution requires incorporation of new race and social equity goals and policies throughout the plan; analysis of the impacts of proposed growth strategies on the most vulnerable communities; reduction of racial and social disparities with capital and program investments; and creating, monitoring, and reporting on equity measures.

- *Transit-oriented development that prioritizes affordability and equity:* One of the most direct means of connecting low-income people to high-quality transit is to build

affordable housing nearby through transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD can also drive displacement, so transit agencies must take care to avoid exacerbating affordability issues from the outset of the planning process by including strong affordability requirements. Mechanisms for supporting TOD include:

- Joint development agreements: Washington, D.C.'s Metropolitan Area Transit Authority requires affordable housing development on land it controls, for example, requiring 20% affordable housing units. Los Angeles' Joint Development program requires that 35% of the total housing units in the Metro Joint Development portfolio be affordable for residents earning 60% or less of the area median income.
- Transit-oriented development funds: Dallas Area Rapid Transit allocates 20% of TOD funding to affordable housing development. The Denver Regional Transit-Oriented Development Fund has spurred the community-driven creation or preservation of more than 1,000 affordable housing units near new light rail stations. San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit requires a minimum of 20% affordable housing units in station TOD and has set a more ambitious target of 35%.

Unfortunately, low-income residents and communities of color often bear the burden of unintended impacts of TOD. Several studies have characterized TOD impacts as promoting economic development, elevating property values, and enhancing livable environments,

but these impacts are not equally distributed. The resulting "Transit-induced gentrification (TIG)" is defined as "a phenomenon whereby the provision of transit service... and associated area of development change in the direction of neighborhood upscaling."

Simulation studies in metropolitan Washington, D.C. communities found that affordability restrictions placed on TOD worked better than housing vouchers for keeping low-income families closer to transit stations. This study went on to recommend that policies focus on developing affordability requirements for TOD. Another strategy localities can employ is to reserve low-priced land at an early stage of TOD to provide the grounds for the construction of affordable housing. Reserving and protecting land before gentrification occurs can ensure affordable housing units for low-income households when land and housing prices begin to rise. To ensure TOD is equitable, the policy and its associated programs and financing tools must support the creation of mixed-income communities.

- *Income-based fares for public transit:* Transit access practices such as fare policies should target high-need communities and reduce financial burdens on low-income transit riders. Fare-capping policies create a de-facto payment plan for low-income riders, for whom it can be a burden to pay the upfront cost of a monthly unlimited pass. In King County, Washington, residents with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty line (FPL) fares. Portland, Oregon's TriMet riders at or below 200% FPL

are eligible for half-price adult single and day passes as well as 72% off monthly and annual passes. Other jurisdictions include Albuquerque, New Mexico; Dallas; Madison, Wisconsin; Pima County, Arizona; and San Jose, California. In summer 2020, Washington, D.C. launched a low-income fare pilot program.

Evidence for Improving Health and Racial Equity

One of the primary ways that transportation drives health and racial equity is its ability to connect people to employment, and thus, income. Access to reliable transportation is a key factor in whether an individual can attain or hold a job. For most people, reliable transportation means having access to a car. However, car ownership places an undue burden on low-income households, leaving them in a precarious and vulnerable position that is further compounded in many low-wealth neighborhoods that lack multimodal transportation choices. Without access to transportation options like public transit, walking, wheeling, or biking, those who live in auto-centric

communities are more likely to fall into poverty due to transportation-related emergencies. These challenges are further exacerbated for people living in rural communities with no access to transit and long distances between destinations.

Transportation and planning infrastructure in a community is also directly connected to health through its conduciveness (or lack thereof) to physical activity. Unfortunately, many communities do not have the infrastructure to support safe walking and biking to everyday destinations. Evidence shows very limited public investments are made in low-income communities to improve roads, sidewalks, lighting, and other transportation infrastructure that would improve people's everyday mobility, physical activity, and safety.

A study of income disparities in street features that encourage walking found that streets with street and/or sidewalk lighting, traffic calming, and marked crosswalks were significantly more common in higher-income communities than in middle- and low-income communities.

School integration to promote social justice and social mobility

While the American populace has grown increasingly racially and ethnically diverse over the last several decades, our schools have gone in the opposite direction and are marked by astounding racial and socioeconomic segregation: As of 2019, more than half of U.S. students were located in "racially concentrated" districts where more than 75% of students were either white or non-white. Due to the combination

of a history of racist housing policies and a reliance on the local property tax base to fund public schools (and because a majority of students attend their neighborhood public schools), these same students are often subject to double segregation by both race and class. Black and Latinx students are more than five times as likely as white students to attend high-poverty schools, and three times as likely as Asian

American/Pacific Islander students. In schools with concentrated poverty, where poor students fill 90% or more of available seats, 80% of the students are Black and Latinx; in contrast, more than 50% of white students attend schools where fewer than 30% of the overall student body is poor. As a result, Black and Latinx students are disproportionately enrolled in schools that are simultaneously tasked with not only teaching, but also expending significant time and resources to address the intersecting race- and class-based disparities their students face before they reach the classroom — all with far fewer resources than predominantly white schools.

As of 2019, predominantly white school districts in the United States received \$23 billion more in annual funding than predominantly non-white school districts despite serving a nearly equal number of students — a difference equating to \$2,226 more per capita. States and localities have the option to pursue compensatory spending to address this disparity and improve educational outcomes for students of color, directing additional funding to schools characterized by racial and economic isolation. However, research indicates that integration efforts offer both better academic and life outcomes for students and a better return on investment for policymakers. More than that, school integration serves to push back against an acceptance that schools are and will continue to be segregated, and that such segregation — should we just manage to even out test scores — is an acceptable outcome.

Policy Examples

School integration efforts are varied, and a growing number of local education agencies are undertaking the work. As of December 2020, more than 180 school districts and charter schools consider race or socioeconomic status in their student assignment or admissions policies, and approximately a quarter of the active policies were implemented in the past four years. Nationwide, local education agencies typically embrace some combination of three policies: socioeconomic-aware controlled choice enrollment and transfer processes for public schools, race- and income-aware school attendance zones and feeder patterns, and expanded school choice via magnet and charter programs.

- *Controlled choice enrollment and transfer processes prioritizing socioeconomic integration:* While most U.S. students attend the public school zoned for their home address, districts have the option to introduce controlled choice into public school enrollment processes as a means of ensuring demographic parity. In Cambridge, Massachusetts, a “controlled choice” enrollment process — which first replaced neighborhood schools in 1981 — considers family choice in student placement, but also factors in socioeconomic status to ensure that district-level demographics are reflected in each school. In 2020, Washington, D.C. — a city in which public school students are split almost equally between district and charter schools — passed legislation allowing charter schools to implement a preference in the citywide enrollment lottery to

prioritize students who are eligible for public benefits, experiencing homelessness, involved in the foster care system, or over age in high school. Similar policies exist across the country, including in Denver; Eugene, Oregon; Newark, New Jersey; San José, California; and St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition, several districts consider socioeconomic status as a factor in student transfer requests, a measure that helps counter the role inter- and intra-district transfers otherwise play in increasing school segregation.

- *Attendance zones and feeder patterns constructed to ensure racial and economic diversity:* Persistent housing inequities and residential segregation continue to pose a significant hurdle to school integration, but school zones need not be set in stone. In 2016, The Century Foundation identified 38 school districts that had intentionally redrawn attendance boundaries, which define the geographic areas in which students must live to attend specific schools, to increase socioeconomic diversity.

One example comes from the Unit 4 School District in Champaign, Illinois, which periodically redraws the geographic attendance zones for its two high schools to reflect changing neighborhood demographics and ensure both racial and socioeconomic parity. This, combined socioeconomic-aware controlled choice elementary enrollment policies and accompanying elementary-to-middle feeder patterns support full K-12 school integration.

In Connecticut, Stamford Public Schools draws its attendance zone boundaries so that in any given school, the share of “educationally disadvantaged” students who qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch, live in public housing, or are English language learners is within 10% of the district average.

- *Expanded public school choice for families through inter-district, magnet, and charter offerings:* In Minnesota, the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage Independent School District prioritizes placement in magnet schools for low-income students, an effort that has helped bring 96% of schools within 20% of the overall district poverty rate. In Rhode Island, Blackstone Valley Prep Mayoral Academy — a charter network enrolling students from communities across the northern part of the state — reserves at least 50% of seats for low-income students, resulting in broad integration across socioeconomic, racial, linguistic, and disability status.

In Connecticut, Hartford Public Schools offers special enrollment opportunities for both intra-district and inter-district students, the former at schools in neighboring suburban districts and the latter in themed non-magnet public schools within Hartford limits. In their 2016 reporting, The Century Foundation identified 25 districts with magnet schools that considered socioeconomic status in their admissions processes, including Duval County Public Schools in Florida and New Haven Public Schools in Connecticut, and one district — Santa Rosa City Schools

in California — with a centralized charter school admissions policy that reserved seats for at-risk students in schools with below-average enrollment.

But school integration is more than the doing away of all-white or all-Black schools or achieving demographics that adequately mirror, or even surpass, the racial diversity of a community. As policymakers work to diversify student enrollment, education leaders at all levels, including those working in school and district administration, need to understand that true integration is not simply about student demographics. Integration involves the many facets of school life that shape the student experience, including staff representation, curricular content, disciplinary practices, academic tracking, and overall school climate.

Evidence for Improving Health and Racial Equity

The public health impacts of racial and socioeconomic school integration are realized through improvements in three key metrics: educational attainment rates for low-income students and students of color, racial attitudes for students of all backgrounds, and social capital.

- *Graduation rates:* High school graduation is a stark predictor of health and well-being across the lifespan. Compared to high school and college graduates, adults who do not complete high school are at higher risk of poor health and are more likely to die prematurely from preventable conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke. Dropout rates are

significantly higher for students in racially and economically segregated schools than in integrated schools.

Research has consistently shown that students in racially and socioeconomically integrated schools — regardless of family background — perform better on standardized tests than their peers in schools with concentrated poverty, and that the achievement and graduation gaps between Black and Latinx students and their white peers are markedly smaller in mixed-income versus high-poverty schools. In contrast, the negative academic impacts of racially segregated schools on Black students have been documented as early as first grade, and overall achievement for Black students is lower in highly segregated schools even after controlling for income.

- *Racial attitudes:* A growing body of literature links racism to poor physical and mental health outcomes for communities of color, and a growing number of jurisdictions are responding with declarations of racism as a public health crisis. Successful efforts to address the crisis hinge on recognition of racism at both the individual and systems levels and across ages. Research demonstrates that children living and educated in racially segregated settings are at greater risk of developing racial stereotypes than their peers in racially diverse settings, and that white students represent the group currently most likely to learn in segregated settings. However, children educated alongside peers from multiple racial and ethnic

groups, regardless of their own racial and ethnic background, hold fewer discriminatory attitudes and prejudices and are more likely to develop cross-racial relationships. They are also more likely to live and work in diverse settings five years after high school graduation. While such benefits are documented at all educational levels, results are strongest for integration efforts undertaken in the earliest grades before children have a chance to internalize racist attitudes.

- *Social capital*: When wealth is concentrated in just a subset of schools, so too is access to power through social networks. While compensatory spending serves to equalize government spending in schools, school integration redistributes not only funding but also access to the language and culture of the middle-class and white society — the gatekeepers to opportunity after high school. This social element is crucial for Black and Latinx students as they consider both higher education and employment, given the racial bias embedded in the selection and retention practices of each.

While Black students made up 13% of the undergraduate population in 2018, they represented 29% of the student body at four-year private for-profit colleges, which lead to both lower earnings and higher debt for students than at public institutions. In contrast, only 8% attended an elite research institution. Meanwhile, Latinx students were concentrated in public institutions and were overrepresented (27% of students) in two-year degree programs. In the workplace, there has been little to

no change in hiring discrimination against Black and Latinx applicants in nearly three decades. Diverse school settings facilitate access to the connections, recommendations, and social knowledge Black and Latinx students need to access, let alone thrive in, historically and predominately white spaces of power.

Racial and socioeconomic school integration has proven to be one of the most powerful strategies to improve outcomes for students of all backgrounds. Following the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, significant efforts to integrate schools occurred for only about 15 years nationwide, but this period is associated with perhaps the most equitable education, economic, and health outcomes for Black Americans in U.S. history. During this time, Black individuals experienced dramatic improvements in educational attainment, earnings, and health status (improvements that did not come at the expense of their white peers), with length of exposure to integration and strong school funding correlated with increasingly better outcomes in adulthood.

Such benefits were cross-generational, reaching not just those individuals who attended desegregated schools, but also their children; in addition, many of these benefits transcended race, with improvements in academic and broader life for white Americans as well. In short, while some have argued that *Brown*-era school integration policies failed, the failure can instead be traced to an inability to prioritize integration over time.

Feasibility

Such deprioritization of integration efforts can be traced to concentrated efforts by white communities and their legislators to maintain segregated systems, and this localized resistance remains a considerable barrier to school integration. Attendance zones provide a concrete example: While cities and states have the opportunity to use geographic attendance zones as a force for integration, most districts — especially those experiencing rapid changes in racial demographics — draw them in ways that intentionally recreate and even heighten residential segregation. Even when school boards implement school zones that supersede residential segregation — an act that is

more common with left-leaning boards — white residents tend to undermine the opportunity for integration by pulling their children from the public school system. Such undermining takes the form of both individual and collective choices, with 71 communities making an attempt to secede from their local school district between 2000 and 2016. White families with means will always hold an inordinate amount of power over the success of voluntary school integration plans, but efforts to capture and potentially leverage the buy-in of these families stand a chance to dramatically reshape outcomes for students of all backgrounds.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[PolicyLink: Inclusionary Zoning Equitable Development Toolkit](#)

[PolicyLink: Equitable Transit-Oriented Development](#)

[The Century Foundation: “A Bold Agenda for School Integration”](#)

[NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund and The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derecho Civiles: “Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration – A Manual for Parents, Educators, & Advocates”](#)

[Poverty & Race Research Action Council and The National Coalition on School Diversity: “Model State School Integration Policies”](#)

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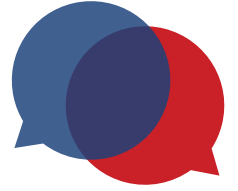
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“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” the preamble of the Declaration of Independence asserts.

As the [Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation](#) (TRHT) Design Team acknowledges, “Unfortunately, the ‘certain unalienable Rights’ and ‘Liberty’ was not meant for those whose basic humanity had long been denied by the founders. They were not meant for Native Americans, whose property was stolen, whose people were massacred, and whose culture was repressed long before independence from England was contemplated. Nor were they meant for African Americans, whose labor was stolen and whose freedom was denied from the earliest days of the colonies. Nor were they meant for various immigrant populations who were deemed unworthy of enjoying basic human rights unless they shed their culture and ‘melted into’ the dominant culture.”¹

This false belief in racial and ethnic hierarchy has been infused throughout the U.S. legal system and operates in both blatant and insidious ways through laws, public policies, and accompanying practices and norms. Whether deliberately or unintentionally, laws and policies have enabled, sustained, and exacerbated unequal treatment of people of color. These

historical contexts underscore the need to reimagine the design of the entire legal system into a framework that is intentionally structured to center respect for communities of color. We acknowledge there is a broad spectrum of approaches to reimagine policing and there are various movements with a myriad of viewpoints. As a best practice, any strategy that is implemented across the spectrum should be informed by the needs and voices of the local community, particularly marginalized populations.

For example, U.S. policing was historically deployed for the social control of communities deemed socially marginal — it evolved from ruling-class efforts to control the immigrant working class in the North and from slave patrols in the South.² Policies and practices continue to implement and sustain this historical intent. For example, the war on drugs assigned drug use intervention to law enforcement in lieu of formulating a public health approach. Scholars suggest that the associated “tough on crime” rhetoric was a racially coded appeal to white populations across class lines aimed at legitimating targeted policing in communities of

color.^{3 4} Enforcing policing largely remains an unequally occurring mechanism of social control resulting in over-policing of communities of color, especially Black communities. The criminalization of homelessness, sex work, and drug abuse exemplifies how law enforcement is deployed to rectify social inequities.⁵

Fortunately, in the same way that laws create and perpetuate inequities, they can also be used to spur positive and transformative change.

The following are measures to transform the legal system into one that “honors the dignity of all people, upholds the civil and human rights of all, and encourages full civic participation from all communities,” as the TRHT

designers envisioned:

- Endorsement and implementation of 21st Century Policing recommendations and other comprehensive police reforms.
- Diversion of police funding to support alternatives to policing and prevention programs.
- Reclassification of violations, decriminalization, and bail, probation, and fees reform to address racial and socioeconomic biases.
- Immigrant-friendly policies and practices to promote equitable opportunity.
- Voting rights protection and expansion.

KEY POLICY AND PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Endorsement and implementation of 21st Century Policing recommendations and other comprehensive police reforms

According to the Mapping Police Violence database, there were over 1,100 deaths by police action in 2020.⁶ This database has documented 7,645 total deaths between 2013 and 2020, and over 120,000 reports of police misconduct.⁷ Further, in 2019, there were over 86,000 (reported) nonfatal injuries due to legal intervention.⁸ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the overall cost of fatal and nonfatal injuries by law enforcement reported in 2010, including medical costs and work lost, was \$1.8 billion.⁹ Legal scholars describe a clear connection between increased exposure to stops by police and an elevated risk of death or physical harm by law enforcement officers.¹⁰

People of color, who represent just under 40% of the U.S. population, accounted for more than 50% of years of life lost due to legal intervention in 2016.¹¹ Native Americans have been killed by law enforcement at a higher per capita rate than any other group in the United States (3.5 times higher than white Americans), with these mortality data likely to be an undercount.¹² Stratification by gender and age showed that Black and Native American males 15 to 34 years of age were nine and six times (respectively) more likely to be killed than other Americans in their age group.¹³ Similarly, Black women are disproportionately represented among women killed by police.¹⁴ Black and Latino individuals are more likely to be

stopped and arrested and to experience nonfatal violence by law enforcement.¹⁵
^{16 17 18} Further, students most at risk for violence by school-based law enforcement officers include children with disabilities, students of color, and poor students.¹⁹

Addressing structural racism in police reform is not new. However, the study of its potential impact on health inequities has gained momentum within the last decade. The range of police reforms that have been enacted are best summarized in the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing report, which was developed during the Obama administration and includes over 50 recommendations and 92 action steps.²⁰ The more recent editions of the report focus less on specific recommendations and more on six pillars of police reform:

- Pillar 1: Building Trust and Legitimacy
- Pillar 2: Policy and Oversight
- Pillar 3: Technology and Social Media
- Pillar 4: Community Policing and Crime Reduction
- Pillar 5: Training and Education
- Pillar 6: Officer Wellness and Safety

A more detailed description of each pillar along with discussion of 10 broad areas of policing reforms can be found in the Appendix.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has reports on implementation best practices of 16 cities that have adopted 21st Century Policing reforms (or beyond), including Aurora, Colorado; Baltimore; Boston; Charleston, South Carolina; Phoenix; Sumter, South Carolina; and Schenectady, New York.²¹ Further, there are many states and municipalities that are considering or

have passed a policing reform.²² An example of the potential coverage of some reforms includes a report from the U.S. Department of Justice, which has funded over 60 municipalities for body-worn cameras as an example of local-level police reform, according to the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.²³

Evidence of Improving Health and Racial Equity

The combination of police reform and anti-racism policy declarations can lead to change in government structures, increase community engagement, and reduce negative health outcomes in communities that are hyper-surveilled and lethally policed. This ultimately leads to greater health and racial equity nationwide.

The six pillars of police reform provide a pathway to improve police-community relationships, and enhance transparency and accountability — which includes improving the accuracy of data about policing behaviors, disciplinary actions, and demographics of police agencies.^{24 25} Data about police agencies is limited, and gathering this information does not reduce the disproportionate burden of police violence within communities of color.²⁶ The communities that are subjected to lethal policing and hyper-surveillance are low-resourced and composed of racial and ethnic minority groups with high rates of chronic illness.^{27 28}

Feasibility

Police reform is happening. At times it may appear to move at a slow pace or become stalled within political debates about the range of options and what

communities, local city councils, and state legislators believe reduces police violence but maintains the role of police in upholding community safety. An equitable approach includes ensuring community voices are centered and a part of every stage of reform. This also includes evaluation and assessment used to inform how citations are issued and contributing to the analysis of the broader community impact of those reforms on community health and well-being and police-community relationships.

One major unsolved challenge is accurate data collection about police behaviors. For example, the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics survey includes data from only about 3,000 state and local law enforcement agencies.²⁹ There is no federal mandate for reporting of police agency-level data, and police unions often prevent against collecting this information. As of this writing, no presidential executive orders have mandated such data collection.

Diversion and/or reallocation of police funding to support alternatives to policing and prevention programs, such as investments in behavioral and mental health services

Although many cities allocate large percentages of their general funds to policing, this spending often doesn't correspond to the actual rates of violent crime in those cities. Since the 1990s, police spending in the United States has remained constant, even though violent and property crime have dramatically declined.³⁰

This demonstrates that although police department budgets are among the largest line items in many locality budgets, increased policing does not help the public's health and well-being. Police spend most of their time responding to minor incidents, and the majority of arrests (80%) are for low-level, non-violent offenses such as "drug abuse violations" and disorderly conduct, according to the Vera Institute of Justice.³¹ In 2015, police violence caused more deaths than diabetes, flu/pneumonia, chronic respiratory disease, or cerebrovascular disease among Black men in their twenties.³² These killings

also contribute to worse mental health effects among other Black Americans in the community, and in other states when there is media coverage of these killings.³³ Additionally, studies have shown that police contact is a predictor for increased delinquent behavior among Black and Latino adolescent boys, and police stops are associated with harmful outcomes for young boys.³⁴ Over-enforcement of minor incidents reduces community trust in law enforcement, making police less effective, and can lead to increases in violence.³⁵

Community alliances among local county health services, law enforcement, mental health services, and community members are designed to address the needs of community members experiencing a mental health crisis. In 2019, police departments with a crisis intervention team program represented only around 15-17% of the total number of police agencies nationally.³⁶ A 2015 survey by the Police Executive Research

Forum found that that while new recruits received a median of 58 hours on firearms training, only eight hours were spent on crisis intervention or de-escalation training.³⁷ In addition to improving safety, health, and equity, resources may be more efficiently and effectively used if mental health professionals and social service personnel are those deployed to calls for non-violent, non-criminal situations, rather than having armed police officers be first responders to mental health or other crises. Diverting funds from police departments allows for more qualified professionals to respond as appropriate and supports programs and efforts that improve health. Additionally, research has found that prioritizing and investing in education, health care, and community-led public safety measures not only improves public health, but also reduces crime.^{38 39 40}

There is an increasing demand among communities to reallocate or redirect funds from the police department to support alternatives to policing, including education, social, and prevention programs.^{41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48} Cuts to local police department budgets can pay for programs that have been underfunded at the expense of increasing police budgets, such as education, health care, and social services. Reallocating funds from policing to other programs involved in social determinants of health has the potential benefit of reducing conflict and police violence while simultaneously improving community safety and health. Alternatives to policing will depend on police departments partnering with community-based services and programs that focus on addressing root causes of crime and social determinants of health, such as mental illness, housing, education, and poverty. To promote

alternatives to enforcement that do not involve the criminal justice system, these community-based services require investment and support from localities. Without such services, police officers will continue to default to current response practices out of necessity. With more communities calling for policing reform, local municipalities can reflect citizen priorities in their budgets by using the funds saved from reducing the size or scope of police departments to invest in services and programs better suited to responding to community needs.

Policy Examples

In 2020 budget votes, campaigns to reallocate funds to meet community needs resulted in over \$840 million in direct cuts from local U.S. police departments, at least \$160 million in investments to communities, and the removal of law enforcement from schools in 25 cities.⁴⁹ Several cities have recently approved plans to cut or divert police department budgets to fund equity and inclusion programs and invest in alternative response personnel or services. Creating units and programs such as mobile crisis assistance teams, mental health support teams, and call diversion programs are examples of how local governments can play a key role in shaping new outcomes for policing.

In San Francisco, \$120 million was redirected from law enforcement to investments in economic opportunity, youth development, housing and homeownership, and health and well-being in Black neighborhoods.⁵⁰ Boston reallocated 20% of the police overtime budget (\$12 million) to investments in equity and inclusion, including efforts of the Boston Public Health Commission.⁵¹

Salt Lake City reduced its police department budget by \$5.3 million, reallocating \$2.5 million to fund a social worker program and \$2.8 million to be reserved for other uses, informed by the newly formed Commission on Racial Equity in Policing.⁵² Albuquerque, New Mexico established a Community Safety Department to act as a third public safety department, in addition to the police and fire departments.⁵³ The department dispatches first responders to respond to non-violent 911 calls involving inebriation, homelessness, addiction, and mental health.⁵⁴ Austin, Texas cut \$21 million from the police budget and reinvested the money into the COVID-19 response; services for unhoused people; addressing substance use, mental health, and family violence prevention; and other forms of public safety and community programs.⁵⁵

In June 2020, the Baltimore City Council approved a \$22 million cut from the police department's budget.⁵⁶ The same month, Hartford, Connecticut cut their police department funding by \$1 million to go toward community serving agencies, including public works, children, youth and recreation, and health and human services.⁵⁷ Norman, Oklahoma's city council cut its police budget by 3.6%, or \$865,000, and reallocated spending on community development programs and the creation of an internal position to track police overtime and outlays.⁵⁸

Promise for Improving Health and Racial Equity

The cycle of policing produces conditions that become causes of crime, which results in increased policing. Documented poor health outcomes linked to policing include

fatal injuries, adverse physiological responses, and psychological stress.⁵⁹ Research has also found significant mental health implications among Black Americans, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and trauma from the threat of violence and murder at the hands of police, in addition to direct experience with police mistreatment or abuse.⁶⁰ Additionally, similar mental health implications have been found in those who have not directly experienced police violence, but are in the same communities, resulting in collective trauma in Black neighborhoods and Black communities.⁶¹ Investments in community-based drug and mental health treatment, education, and other social institutions, rather than into police departments, can make communities safer while improving life outcomes for all. Reforming policing and utilizing alternatives to armed police as first responders to mental health and other forms of crisis would also likely reduce the rate of death due to police violence.⁶²

Feasibility

A potential challenge of decreasing police department budgets is ensuring that the recruitment of younger and more diverse new hires as well as new trainings intended to reform enforcement are not cut from the budget. When police departments face budget cuts, certain measures that even advocates of police reform propose, such as community relations programs and recruitment efforts for younger and more diverse officers, are typically the first items cut from the budget.⁶³

Additionally, even if the police department is the one making the

investment into a crisis intervention team, they may not be the department that accrues the savings, making it difficult to gain support from these departments from a cost savings perspective. A police department or department of health may incur the costs of training and personnel, but other departments or other levels of government will see the savings, making it more difficult for budget managers in a police department to justify spending on alternative, non-police first responder staff when competing with other departments for funds.⁶⁴

However, there is broad support for reform among law enforcement practitioners, who have voiced frustration with having to play too many roles in their communities and being expected to act as the default party to respond to complex social problems such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health crises.⁶⁵ A July 2020 national poll from Gallup found that overall, 47% of respondents

supported reducing police department budgets and shifting the money to social programs, although there are large gaps by political party.⁶⁶ Another national poll that framed defunding more generally asked about redirecting taxpayer funds to other agencies so that they could respond to certain emergencies instead of police. It found that overall, most supported redirecting money from police departments and reallocating funds to pay for other service providers to respond to calls about medical emergencies, addiction, mental illness, and homelessness.⁶⁷ Specifically, 72% supported redirecting money from police departments to pay for mental health experts, with 67% of white respondents and 87% of Black respondents supporting these changes.⁶⁸ Overall, 66% supported reallocating funds to pay for social workers to respond to calls involving a person experiencing homelessness, with 64% of white respondents and 71% of Black respondents.⁶⁹

Reclassification of violations, decriminalization, and bail, probation, and fees reform to address racial and socioeconomic biases

State and local government use of criminal fees and fines to fill budget gaps was reintroduced in the 1980s. The use of these fines as a revenue strategy accelerated in 2008 during the economic recession, despite declining rates of crime in the United States since the 1990s. Violent crime rates fell 51% between 1993 and 2018, while the property crime rate decreased 54% during the same time frame.⁷⁰

Policing in these communities is part of a general form of hyper-surveillance that may be linked to the resurrection of de

facto debtors' prisons to close deficits in many counties and municipalities.⁷¹⁷² Municipalities have relied on police officers to collect fines and fees from criminal convictions, traffic fines, and child support payments and engage in disproportionate vehicle stops. These offenses thereby entrap poor (largely) Black communities in a cycle of imprisonment and poverty, and have contributed to declining revenues since the 2008 recession.⁷³ Currently, an estimated \$50 billion of carceral debt is being held by 10 million people.⁷⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic also increased

calls for the reduction or suspension of fines and fees because of job losses, disruptions in employment stability and income flow, and many feeling they would not fully recover from the pandemic.⁷⁵ Research on fines and fees in Indiana prove that one implication of unpaid fines may be converted into a civil judgment, which can be used to obtain real estate liens.⁷⁶ This action was challenged in *Timbs v. Indiana*, and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that local governments should be banned for collecting excessive fines such as the seizure of property to pay for fines individuals cannot afford.^{77 78}

The cost of managing probation, or community supervision programs, has become more unwieldy over the past decades. Historically, these efforts were developed to be less punitive and provide restoration for those recently incarcerated. Over time, the parole and probation process has become costly to individuals released from imprisonment and their families, and has created administrative challenges to managing caseloads, increasing costs to taxpayers, and becoming a primary driver for incarceration.

Policy Examples

There is a growing list of court activity produced by the Fines and Fees Justice Center to reduce or eliminate the disproportionate effect of fines and fees on communities across the United States.⁷⁹ There are over 20 states engaged in some form of bail and pretrial fine and fee reforms, and close to 30 states applying a fine and fee tool to make policy changes. At a local level, many are taking place in states like California, and states have launched studies with in-depth case studies

examining the social and economic burden of fines and fees. PolicyLink initiated a 10-city initiative to support fine and fee reform.⁸⁰

Framing Policy Reform for Fines and Fees

The Pew Charitable Trusts introduced a framework to guide decision-making for state and local governments to improve community supervision.⁸¹ This can be done by reforming probation and parole procedures by suggesting the following:

- *Alternatives to arrest, incarceration, and supervision:* Divert low-risk individuals to social or health services instead of arrest. This can defer prosecution, allow community service as an alternative to imprisonment, and help to prioritize higher-risk individuals for the court system. Orleans Parish, Louisiana eliminated discretionary juvenile administrative fees, which includes those for probation supervision, physical and mental examination, care and treatment, appointed counsel, medical treatment, teen or youth court programs, and deferred disposition agreements.⁸² Several California counties stopped collecting juvenile fee debt and waived existing debt.⁸³

Graduated sanctions for probation is a strategy used primarily to reduce juvenile detention and includes an accountability-based graduated series of steps (including incentives, treatment, and services) applicable to youth within the juvenile justice system. It provides appropriate sanctions for every act for which a juvenile is adjudicated delinquent by inducing their law-abiding behavior

and by preventing their subsequent involvement with the juvenile justice system. In Rock County, Wisconsin and Union County, North Carolina, the use of graduated sanctions for youth who violated probation has reduced detention admissions and average length of stay for all youth.⁸⁴ Multnomah County, Oregon instituted a “sanctions grid” for probation violations that minimized staff inconsistencies while encouraging sanctions other than detention.⁸⁵ Rewards and incentives grids should be used in conjunction with the sanctions to promote positive reinforcement.⁸⁶

This also includes *reclassification of offenses*, much of which is under state control. Select misdemeanors may be reclassified as civil infractions — noncriminal violations of rules, policies, or laws for which people cannot be jailed — or simply legalized. Many jurisdictions treat drug possession as a felony. In some cases, trace amounts of a substance can result in a felony conviction, supervision, and even a prison sentence. In recent years, however, an increasing number of states have adopted reforms that reclassify and redefine certain drug crimes. Between 2009 and 2013, more than 30 states reformed their drug laws, reducing the maximum allowable prison terms for certain felony drug offenses, downgrading felonies to misdemeanors, and sometimes eliminating a supervision term in its entirety.⁸⁷

Local leaders are also leading the charge, including a growing number of “progressive prosecutors” who are advancing policies to improve public safety and reduce mass incarceration.⁸⁸ For example, in February 2021, Baltimore City State’s Attorney Marilyn

Mosley announced permanent adoption of policies preventing prosecution for minor-level offenses (e.g., minor drug possession, prostitution, and minor traffic offenses).⁸⁹ The policy resulted in decreases in arrests, a 20% reduction in violent crime, and a 36% decline in property crime.⁹⁰ Additionally, there were 13 fewer homicides than during the previous year.⁹¹ The announcement also cited data from the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services indicating an 18% decline in the incarcerated population in Baltimore City during the COVID-19 pandemic and a corresponding 39% decrease in people entering the criminal justice system, compared to March 2020.

San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin prohibited his staff from using California’s three-strikes law to increase sentences.⁹² In Portsmouth, Virginia, Commonwealth’s Attorney Stephanie Morales committed to reducing bias in the criminal justice system and decriminalizing misdemeanor drug possessions.⁹³ In Cook County, Illinois, State’s Attorney Kim Foxx implemented a suite of reforms, including raising the threshold for felony charges of retail theft to \$1,000 and increasing the use of diversion programs as an alternative to incarceration by 25%.⁹⁴

Legalizing or decriminalizing marijuana use and possession is another policy strategy gaining traction at both the state and local levels to address inequities in policing, reduce the prison population, and stimulate the local economy. Nearly 100 localities in over a dozen states have enacted municipal laws or resolutions that either fully or partially decriminalize minor cannabis possession offenses.⁹⁵ Additional

citywide ordinances have passed in states that later decriminalized or legalized marijuana.⁹⁶

- *Risk and needs-based policies:* This enables parole and probation officers to use validated assessment tools to develop case plans tailored to individuals based on their level of risk of reoffending and help to determine their sense of need. This may also facilitate case load management of parole and probation officers. Washington, D.C. has long relied on risk assessment tools to determine who is detained pretrial.⁹⁷ District attorneys in Brooklyn and Manhattan in New York City, and Philadelphia removed cash bail for low-level offenses and ordered prosecutors not to request bail in most misdemeanor cases.⁹⁸ Multnomah County, Oregon developed a risk assessment instrument (RAI) used for criminal justice decision-making.⁹⁹ In Oklahoma City, probation officers applied an evidence-based program and concentrated control and correctional resources on high-risk offenders.¹⁰⁰ Individuals supervised by probation officers with smaller, more manageable caseloads are shown to receive more successful experiences with correctional interventions, leading to improved probation outcomes.¹⁰¹
- *Adopt shorter supervision periods, center on goals, and utilize incentives:* This strategy can help reduce the time spent managing long probation periods, which have been shown to not deter additional offenses being committed. Parole and probation officers can be encouraged to adopt and/or increase incentives and minimize the volume of rules

and regulations, thereby providing opportunities for enhanced case management. Arkansas passed a law in 2017 allowing for low-level or low-risk individuals violating parole to be sent to short-term facilities or to treatment programs as an alternative to sending them to prison.¹⁰²

- *Individualize conditions for managing financial obligations:* Community corrections are supported by the fines and fees formerly incarcerated individuals are mandated to pay. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, recommendations should focus on affordable, reduced, or eliminated fines and fees; prohibiting suspensions of driver's licenses; and considering alternatives to financial payments.¹⁰³ Ottawa County, Michigan reduced jail fees associated with duration of incarceration; fees went from \$60 per day to a one-time flat fee of \$60.¹⁰⁴ In 2020, Dallas County reduced jail phone call fees, eliminated fees for setting up inmate accounts, and reduced third-party vendor fees.¹⁰⁵ St. Louis County's jail fee ordinance eliminated booking fees, bond fees, and fees related to providing medical care for incarcerated persons, and waived \$3.4 million in outstanding debt.¹⁰⁶
- *Reduce pathways to incarceration:* Supervision revocations ensure that probation officers must assess people under their supervision for their risk of reoffending and adjust depending on this assessment. According to The Pew Charitable Trusts, "Supervision revocations, especially for technical violations, are a major driver of costly jail and prison admissions, and even

short jail stays can create serious hardships for individuals, including loss of employment, decreased wages, housing insecurity, and family instability.”¹⁰⁷ This policy seeks to advance standard definitions of technical violations (of parole and probation), minimize arrests for these violations, and maintain continuity of care and access to social and health services. Instead of eliminating incarceration for technical violations, several states have implemented revocation caps on the number of days a person will serve for probation and parole violations.¹⁰⁸ State examples include Missouri and Louisiana. At the local level, San Francisco City and County provides persons experiencing homelessness with an option to clear “quality of life” citations if they receive 20 hours of social service assistance.¹⁰⁹ Quality of life charges are issued for infractions like loitering or sleeping on a sidewalk and are often given to people struggling with homelessness.

Other policy strategies providing re-entry support include the use of transition specialists, providing a continuum of health treatment, and maintaining treatment for substance use and behavioral health issues.

- *Support community supervision services:* Policymakers should consider the role that community supervision organizations can play in their ability to shape the workforce, adopt evidence-based strategies, monitor and assess agency performance, and allocate funding based on evidence-based strategies.

Promise for Improving Health and Racial Equity

These policies can greatly reduce the number of people entering the carceral system. For the formerly incarcerated, it can reduce their chances of re-entry into the system and lifts the burden of government-sanctioned debt that creates financial hardships, preventing them from exercising their full rights (see Voting below). Further, the reduced financial burden of fines and fees for those incarcerated and for those who are under community supervision programs can lead to:

- *State and local savings:* It is estimated that a collective national savings for states and localities would be close to \$7.2 billion annually.¹¹⁰ The 2014 passage of Proposition 47 in California projected to save the state up to \$1 billion over a five-year period and to direct those funds to substance use and mental health programs and services.¹¹¹
- *Reducing unemployment, enhancing the workforce, and boosting the economy:* The annual GDP has the potential to increase by \$65 billion by avoiding employment losses of those with criminal records.¹¹² Other savings can be calculated by investing in education programs in prisons. Every \$1 invested in prison education programs reduces incarceration costs by \$4-\$5 during the first three years post-release of a prisoner.¹¹³

Feasibility

A key barrier to the reforms being proposed is that many state and local courts, jails, and prisons rely on fines and fees as a source of revenue. With dwindling coffers due to the COVID-19

pandemic, reducing or eliminating these fees and eliminating that revenue source may be challenging. In addition, some city and county government leaders may be unaware of the negative impacts caused by fines and fees,

presenting an opportunity for public health and community-based and criminal justice advocates to elevate the influence these fees have on local health and economy.

Immigrant-friendly policies and practices to promote equitable opportunity

The United States is built on immigration. Early settlers arrived to America from Europe, colonizing the land and inviting immigration from fellow Europeans. Fast forward to the present, immigration now holds negative stigma even though its purpose is no longer to colonize land but to have the opportunity to live in it. The false belief in a hierarchy of human value shows up in immigration through the stigmatization of immigrants of color, especially immigrants from Mexico and other countries in Latin America. Immigrants of color face racism and discrimination for moving to a land of opportunities and “freedom.” Immigrants account for 13.7% of the U.S. population and 23% of them are undocumented persons.¹¹⁴ It is important to acknowledge that the pathway to citizenship is not easy and attainable to everyone. Undocumented immigrants live in constant fear of being separated from the family they have created in the United States. They aren’t supported by federal policies and privileges that others are granted, such as health insurance or government benefits. Even though some cities are not welcoming to immigrants, others have adopted policies that have made them safe havens for immigrants.

Policy Examples

- *Sanctuary policies:* These are a range of policies that protect immigrants from potential deportation when reporting crimes, shielding local law enforcement from liability, and allowing states, counties, and cities to determine how they should allocate their resources.¹¹⁵
¹¹⁶ Sanctuary cities like Los Angeles prohibit local officials from questioning an individual’s immigration status.¹¹⁷ Birmingham, Alabama has passed a resolution indicating that the police would not be a source for federal government and would be open to granting business licenses to all immigrants.¹¹⁸ In addition, Chicago has various laws that halt investigation of residents’ citizenship status.¹¹⁹ Sanctuary policies aim to restore trust between the community and local enforcement to address the real concerns of safety in neighborhoods.¹²⁰ These few examples show the ways that cities try to protect the undocumented community.
- *Welcoming City plans:* Welcoming Cities are inclusive of all individuals, regardless of their immigration status. These cities implement policies, plans, or programs that help empower undocumented

immigrants. Nashville, Tennessee, a Welcoming City, has put up billboards throughout the city stating: “Welcome the immigrant you once were.”¹²¹ This powerful message attempts to build a connection among individuals, thus strengthening the community. Some of these cities have intentionally created offices to serve “new Americans.”¹²² One of the sectors that most, if not all, Welcoming Cities focus on to support undocumented immigrants is employment and business.

Chicago implemented the Chicago New Americans Plan, which recognizes and acknowledges undocumented immigrants and includes several economic initiatives, including enhancing immigrant entrepreneurship.¹²³ These resources are crucial in granting immigrants the ability to provide for themselves but also demonstrate that they are important contributors to the city’s economy.

Dayton, Ohio implemented the Welcome Dayton Plan, supporting the integration of immigrants through a series of services such as encouraging business and economic development.¹²⁴ This could entail working with entities such as the city’s Small Business Development Center to help immigrants overcome barriers when starting a business.¹²⁵ The plan attempts to identify and deal with the concerns that individuals may have, such as accessing small loans for businesses. Most importantly, these plans create connections between immigrants and existing resources from community organizations, private entities, and other city and government offices.¹²⁶

Evidence of Improving Health and Racial Equity

Being a sanctuary city is not only beneficial to undocumented residents but also to the community overall. Sanctuary cities have 35.5 per 10,000 fewer crimes committed compared to non-detainer (areas that will support ICE if a warrant is presented) counties.¹²⁷ Additionally, two-thirds of the non-sanctuary cities have higher murder rates.¹²⁸ Apart from the safety provided to the community, being a sanctuary city alleviates fear from the undocumented community, which positively impacts their health. Fear may prevent individuals from attending health facilities and receiving medical attention.¹²⁹ This is critical, as chronic illnesses may be diagnosed at advanced stages. In fact, a study in 2012 reported that 40% of medical providers noticed that ICE activities exacerbate mental health problems like depression and stress.¹³⁰ It is important to note that inclusive health policies within sanctuary cities allow for emergency shelters to allocate resources and support to the immigrant community.¹³¹

Sanctuary cities are safer and economically stronger than non-detainer counties.¹³² Sanctuary cities tend to have statistically significant lower unemployment rates than non-sanctuary cities.¹³³ This supports the city’s economy, as individuals are more likely to redirect the money gained toward local business, increasing the prosperity of the city. In addition, the employment-to-population ratio in sanctuary cities is higher than the employment-to-population ratio in non-sanctuary cities, indicating a stronger local economy.¹³⁴ In fact, non-sanctuary cities that implemented 287(g) agreements granting limited

immigration authority to state and local law enforcement face high costs for both state and local law enforcement agencies.¹³⁵ Thus, being a sanctuary city not only helps against the depletion of resources, it also positively impacts the community.

Feasibility

A particular barrier to more cities, counties, and states becoming sanctuary cities is both federal and state preemption. Under the Trump administration, sanctuary jurisdictions were threatened with federal funding cuts.¹³⁶ This would mean a loss in budget for much-needed resources and programs like Medicaid and education.

Voting rights protection and expansion

The right to vote is fundamental to a democracy. However, for most of U.S. history, the right to vote has been exclusively reserved for white men. While women were granted the right to vote in 1920, it would be another 45 years before voting rights were expanded to include Black Americans. However, those rights are not guaranteed, and attempts to suppress the vote of people of color can be found over the decades. The Center for American Progress writes:

“In 2012, the national voter turnout rate among Black citizens exceeded that of white citizens for the first time in American history. But this was quickly followed by two devastating U.S. Supreme Court rulings that eliminated core voting rights protections and threatened to undo decades of progress toward a vibrant democracy. These rulings, combined with the continued existence of decades-old voter suppression and disenfranchisement policies, threaten the fundamental right to vote for millions of Americans.”¹³⁷

Voter suppression is a form of structural racism influencing policies that directly

affect community health.¹³⁸ While many voting laws are controlled at the state level, local leaders are taking steps to ensure that more of its residents can exercise their civic duty and drive local decision-making.

Policy Examples

- *Extending the right to vote in local elections to non-citizens:* Voting rights are a facilitator of policies centered on racial justice at the local level through several historic initiatives granting non-citizens the ability to participate in the electoral process, some of which include extending voting privileges in local elections to non-citizens. For example, Takoma Park, Maryland changed its law in 1992 to allow participation in the city’s mayoral and council elections, regardless of immigration status.¹³⁹

Six towns in Montgomery County, Maryland enabled documented and undocumented residents to participate in the electoral process, and other places are using similar strategies.¹⁴⁰ In San Francisco, a new policy has passed allowing people to register to vote in school

board elections, regardless of legal immigration status.¹⁴¹ This new rule allows for non-citizens under temporary status who hold visas or are granted asylum to play an active role in public school board elections. This is particularly crucial because 1 in 3 students in San Francisco's public schools are members of immigrant families.¹⁴²

New York City allowed non-citizens to vote in local school board elections from 1968 to 2003, until it did away with elected school boards.¹⁴³ The issue is also being discussed in Boston; Montpelier, Vermont; Portland, Maine; and many other U.S. cities.¹⁴⁴

- *Youth voting:* According to FairVote, young citizens are of driving age, work without restrictions on their hours, and pay taxes, so they should also have a voice in their local government in the form of rights to engage in the political process.¹⁴⁵ Research shows the ability of young voters to cast a meaningful vote (16- and 17-year-olds) and that they are as informed and engaged in political issues as older voters (voters above the age of 18).¹⁴⁶ Lowering the voting age in local elections can also lead to more fairness among the constituents that elected policy officials are serving. Within our current system where young people are unable to vote until turning 18, some citizens won't have a chance to vote for their mayor until they are almost 22. Most of the Council of the District of Columbia, as well as Mayor Muriel Bowser, have already signed onto a bill that proposes lowering the voting age in Washington, D.C.¹⁴⁷ Takoma Park, Maryland, bordering Washington, D.C., became the first jurisdiction in the country to allow 16- and 17-year-olds

to vote in 2013.¹⁴⁸ Following this policy change, several other progressive cities have followed suit, the largest being Berkeley, California.¹⁴⁹ At present, cities have only lowered voting age requirements for local elections.

- *Amendments to timing of local elections to encourage greater civic participation:* In the United States, most elected officials are elected on days other than the official Election Day, therefore underpinning the importance of timing. Statistically, most local officials are elected by a politically active minority since far fewer voters turn out during off-cycle elections.¹⁵⁰ Understanding this fact, some localities have put forth a concerted effort to align the timing of local elections with federal and state elections to improve civic participation. Systematically altering election timing has been shown to affect political outcomes.¹⁵¹ The lower turnout in off-cycle years enhances the effectiveness of mobilization efforts and makes non-representative groups proportionately larger in making decisions within local elective outcomes/results.¹⁵² Scheduling of elections can be "tactics designed to distribute political power" when interest groups and political parties can take advantage of the political process to control policy outcomes on the local and county level.¹⁵³

Some cities could use a municipal right to vote to pass felon re-enfranchisement, election day or universal voter registration, paper ballots, early and weekend voting, foreign language ballots, and other such ordinances for city elections to expand the ability of

citizen participation and/or voter engagement.

- *Restoring voting rights to ex-offenders:* An estimated 6.1 million Americans are denied their voting rights due to disenfranchisement laws.¹⁵⁴ Eleven states go so far as to deny voting rights even once a sentence is complete and/or create challenges to have voting rights restored, such as requiring a pardon.¹⁵⁵ Those 11 states account for 50% of the disenfranchised population, in which Black Americans are overly represented. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures:¹⁵⁶
 - In two states (Maine and Vermont) and (newly) the Washington, D.C., people with felony convictions never lose their right to vote, even while they are incarcerated.
 - In 21 states, people with felony convictions lose their voting rights only while incarcerated and receive automatic restoration upon release.
 - In 16 states, people with felony convictions lose their voting rights during incarceration, and for a period after, typically while on parole and/or probation, after which voting rights are automatically restored. The formerly incarcerated may also have to pay outstanding fines, fees, or restitution before their rights are restored as well. Such is the case in Florida, which passed an amendment in 2018 to restore voting rights for over 1 million Floridians with felony convictions. The state legislature followed up with a law clarifying

that to get their voting rights back, felons needed to pay off all fines and fees related to their convictions. Millions in fines exist across the state, including \$278 million in Miami-Dade County. This debt can inhibit the restoration of voting rights.¹⁵⁷

- *Ranked-choice voting to encourage ballot reform:* Ranked-choice voting (RCV), an electoral system that allows voters to rank candidates by preference on their ballots, with higher ranked candidates obtaining the vote, has been adopted by many states in recent years. For example, this method of voting has been adopted for statewide and federal elections in Maine and Alaska and implemented in over 20 cities for mayoral and city council races.¹⁵⁸ FairVote notes that “allowing all municipalities to choose for themselves what form of elections best suits their communities creates smaller laboratories of electoral reform and, hopefully through success at the local level, state legislators can become climatized to the change.”¹⁵⁹ If legislators are not convinced to implement this change, this method of voting may be a catalyst to support overall ballot initiatives.

To increase accessibility for persons with disabilities, localities can strengthen voting rights for people with disabilities under guardianship and ensure that accessible voting methods are always available to all voters in every election, in every state, such as drive-up voting implemented in Washington, D.C.¹⁶⁰

Evidence for Improving Health and Racial Equity

Civic participation is a determinant of health and is recognized as such by both national (e.g., Healthy People) and international (e.g., Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development) organizations measuring health and well-being.^{161 162} Participation in civic life improves social well-being through increased feelings of purpose, connection, and belonging, which in turn improve physical health.¹⁶³ In a study of 44 countries, including the United States, voter participation was associated with better self-reported health.¹⁶⁴ Another study found that individuals who did not vote reported worse health.¹⁶⁵

Voting builds the political and social capital of communities, which is especially important for communities of color who have largely been disenfranchised. When larger numbers of people from certain communities and groups participate in voting, it translates into greater influence over determining who holds political power to advance

policies that respond to the needs and priorities of their community. Thus, voting drives the policies that shape the social determinants of health and equity.

Feasibility

Voting rights are largely determined at the state level. Unfortunately, many state lawmakers have introduced restrictive voting bills into law, and these numbers are on the rise. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, as of March 24, 2021, state legislators have introduced 361 bills with restrictive provisions in 47 states, many of which seek to undermine the authority of local officials.¹⁶⁶ Nearly a quarter place stricter requirements on voter IDs, with some of the most restrictive bills coming out of Arizona, Georgia, and Texas.¹⁶⁷ One of the bills passed on March 25, 2021 restricts the availability and hours of voting drop boxes and criminalizes the act of giving snacks or water to voters waiting in line at polling places in Georgia.¹⁶⁸

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[A Guidebook to Reimagining America's Crisis Response Systems: A Decision-Making Framework for Responding to Vulnerable Populations in Crisis](#)

[Reimagining Policing: How State and Local Governments Can Work Together to Create Better, Safer Communities](#)

APPENDIX

The six pillars of 21st Century Policing Recommendations

Campaign Zero, a national effort to end police violence, has taken recommendations from the 21st Century Policing report that are framed under the six pillars below as 10 broad areas of policing reforms.¹⁶⁹

| Pillar | Description | Example Policy and Practice Changes |
|--|--|---|
| Pillar 1: Building trust and legitimacy | Building trust is the foundational principle underlying the nature of relations between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting procedural justice as the guiding principle for internal and external policies and practices. • Establishing a culture of transparency and accountability. • Initiating positive nonenforcement activities to engage communities. • Tracking and analyzing the level of trust communities have in police. • Promoting workforce diversity. |
| Pillar 2: Policy and oversight | Police are to carry out their responsibilities according to established policies, which must reflect community values. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting use of force: These actions include, but are not limited to, standards and reporting for use of deadly force; revisions of police department use-of-force policies, enabling monitoring, and assessing use-of-force behaviors; and developing accountability structures to prevent excessive use of force and repeat offenders. Reductions in use of force have resulted in fewer police killings.¹⁷⁰ In 2018, Asheville, North Carolina passed a policy of affirmative consent for police searches with a goal of lessening racial disparities in policing activity evidenced by city traffic stop data.¹⁷¹ The law intends to reduce disagreements on whether consent was given verbally and to reduce discriminatory stops and searches with insufficient probable cause. Asheville also has two regulations on police searches, which include reducing the reasons for which officers can deploy a consent search and eliminating a past criminal activity or “suspicious behavior” as sufficient causes.¹⁷² Philadelphia passed a ban on chokeholds prohibiting the use of restraints or other physical contact that presents a significant risk of asphyxiation, including chokeholds and the placement of body weight on the head, face, neck, or back.¹⁷³ Washington, D.C.’s Comprehensive Policing and Justice Emergency Reform Act limits the use of force by police, requires body-camera footage to be made public more quickly after a police shooting, and bans the Metropolitan Police Department from purchasing military-style equipment from the federal government.¹⁷⁴ • Establishing civilian oversight boards that provide structures to report police misconduct and to thoroughly investigate reports: While civilian oversight programs date back to 1930, there was a surge in these programs from 1990 to 2010.¹⁷⁵ A 2017 survey of Major Cities Chiefs Association members found that 63% of the 41 responding agencies made changes in their civilian oversight system from 2013 to 2016.¹⁷⁶ These boards varied in oversight authority, from reviews of excessive force complaints to hearing citizen appeals, with just four having the authority to impose disciplinary actions. Philadelphia’s Police Advisory Committee was reestablished in 2017 and focuses on policy review, investigations, and community outreach.¹⁷⁷ Through executive order, Tampa, Florida’s then-mayor Bob Buckhorn established the Citizens Review Board in 2016.¹⁷⁸ The board reviews disciplinary cases and other issues identified by the community and police department. Fairfax County, Virginia established a Civilian Review Panel to review abuse of authority complaints and serious misconduct.¹⁷⁹ • Providing fair and transparent police contracts: The development and enactment of state-level Law Enforcement Officers’ Bills of Rights provide structures, opportunities, and protections for officers when reported for misconduct, injuring citizens, or actions resulting in death. These policies allow for less accountability and prevent punishment of officers who are repeat offenders. Reforms should include tracking and monitoring systems within and across states to keep open the history of officers who engage in misconduct. |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>(continued) Pillar 2: Policy and oversight</p> | <p>Police are to carry out their responsibilities according to established policies, which must reflect community values.</p> | <p>In 2018 in Texas, the Austin City Council approved a new police union contract and an ordinance establishing a new Office of Police Oversight.¹⁸⁰ The measure allows the public to submit complaints anonymously and allows the office to publish recommendations with case details for critical incidents and sustained misconduct. It also offers a close-out meeting with results to anyone issuing a complaint and requires the police chief to respond publicly when a civilian oversight recommendation or policy change will not be implemented. Philadelphia requires public hearings to be held on the city's initial contract proposal going into contract negotiations with the police union.¹⁸¹ The public hearing is required 30 days before Philadelphia sends its contract offer to the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 5, which represents the local police. While residents will be unable to comment on the final contract proposals, the purpose of this measure is to mandate public accountability and transparency in a process that has often been hidden from the public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating military actions and military weaponry of police departments: Studies have suggested that the increased militarization of police departments has not reduced crime, but may have introduced more severe policing behaviors, especially in communities of color.¹⁸² The Defense Logistics Agency's 1033 Program provides provisions for municipal and state governments to apply for funding.¹⁸³ Reform in this area will require federal and state intervention. • Eliminating profits of policing: Policing has been supported by achieving quotas for tickets, arrests, fines, and fees. These practices have disproportionately burdened communities of color and low-income communities.¹⁸⁴ This has also resulted in the seizure of property and money from those who have not been convicted of crimes. |
| <p>Pillar 3: Technology and social media</p> | <p>Implementation, use, and evaluation of technology and social media by law enforcement agencies.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing body-worn cameras for police: In 2015, \$23 million of federal funds supported the adoption of body-worn cameras.¹⁸⁵ This is both a state and local-level policy. Thirty-seven states have been reported by the National Council of State Legislatures as having introduced legislation around body-worn cameras, with 20 measures adopted.¹⁸⁶ By 2016, the number of states considering body-worn camera legislation decreased to 22, and only five adopted new policies.¹⁸⁷ <p>The U.S. Department of Justice funded over 73 municipalities to expand the use of body-worn cameras.¹⁸⁸ Louisville, Kentucky has made body-worn cameras a policy, which limits the officer's discretion on when to record.¹⁸⁹ The policy does not prohibit officer pre-report viewing, it does not make footage available to individuals filing complaints, and it limits biometric searching of footage. There is a continued conversation about best practices when integrating body-worn cameras into policing.</p> |

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| <p>Pillar 4: Community policing and crime reduction</p> | <p>Community policing emphasizes working with neighborhood residents to co-create public safety.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing access to mental health services, creating mental health professional teams to assist with crises: The Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) program is a longstanding community-based behavioral health crisis response program in Eugene, Oregon. CAHOOTS is a 24/7 mobile crisis intervention program that diverts crisis calls that would otherwise be handled by police, including intoxication, mental illness problems, and other front-line social interventions.¹⁹⁰ In 2018, CAHOOTS cost the city of Eugene \$798,000 to support 31 hours of service provision per day.¹⁹¹ As calls for services has increased, this has reduced calls to police by 5-8%.¹⁹² The Houston Police Department has established the Crisis Call Diversion (CCD) program in response to increasing mental health crisis calls that consumed police resources.¹⁹³ When a 911 call is related to mental health, instead of sending an officer to respond, the caller is immediately connected to mental health experts working with the dispatch who are able to provide crisis counseling, care plans, and resource referrals. Additionally, by diverting calls away from police and fire emergency responses, the CCD program has saved the Houston Police Department over \$1.3 million.¹⁹⁴ • Establishing community engagement and empowerment: This includes developing a civilian first responders' program allowing communities to aid in the response to their neighbors, facilitating better conflict resolutions and enhancing the ability to interrupt violent actions. It also involves giving communities structured opportunities to evaluate and provide direct feedback to police about their behaviors, policies, and practices to improve police-community relationships and improve policing behaviors. • Enabling independent investigations of police misconduct and killings: This policy decision provides structures that remove police departments from investigating police misconduct and actions that result in injury and death. To accomplish this, strategies include lowering the burden of proof for civil rights investigations, using federal funds for independent investigations and developing a special prosecutor's role to monitor and investigate police violence. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department in North Carolina expanded their Courtesy Policy (Rule of Conduct #25) to include a provision that officers "will not taunt, verbally bait, or initiate needless or unnecessary physical contact with a subject" to ensure officers are treating citizens with fairness and respect.¹⁹⁵ Officers who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action and/or removed from the police force. |
| <p>Pillar 5: Training and education</p> | <p>Reforms in training of police should include an increased awareness of mental health, addressing unconscious or implicit racial biases.</p> | <p>The results of police training reform may lead to improved community-relationships, understanding how to engage with and have appropriate interactions with diverse populations, and better de-escalation techniques. For example, Cleveland has improved police training and has seen a 32% reduction in use of force.¹⁹⁶</p> |
| <p>Pillar 6: Officer wellness and safety</p> | <p>Reforms regarding the overall physical, mental, and emotional health of law enforcement staff.</p> | <p>The impact of substance use, divorce, and financial strain can affect the judgment and actions of individual officers. San Diego began investigating issues surrounding police violence and understood many of the officers involved in those incidents suffered from substance abuse, were coping with divorce, and experiencing financial strain.¹⁹⁷</p> |

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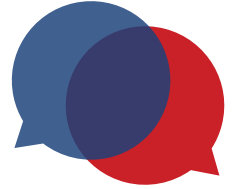
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For centuries, people of color in the United States have been denied equal access to resources and opportunities. From the forcible displacement of Indigenous people, to the enslavement and exploitation of Black Americans, to the historic and present-day exclusion of immigrant groups and exploitation of people of color in the workforce, inequity is created and sustained in U.S. economic policies and practices.

By imposing systemic barriers to economic opportunities, these policies and practices sustain the false belief in a hierarchy of human value. These barriers perpetuate and validate the biased valuations of people based on their race and ethnicity, with devastating impacts. In 2019, the median wealth for Black and Latinx families was between \$24,000 and \$36,000, compared to \$188,000 for white families.¹

Wealth is a means of accessing services, goods, and resources. It provides families with the means to purchase and own a home, invest in their children's education, start a business, support social and community institutions of importance, and ensure the financial security of generations to come. Wealth is also a tool for power and influence through access to the political process. Households with wealth can donate time and money, thereby influencing the political process and the policies that are important to their communities.

Reducing gaps in income and wealth requires acknowledging and honoring the equal value of all people, investing in communities that have been historically

disenfranchised, and rectifying past wrongdoings to ensure such disparities in economic opportunity and access are not passed along to future generations.

Equitable policies aim to create an "economic democracy, where every person, family, and community of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds can individually and collectively participate and thrive in the U.S. economy."² Strategies should be informed by the needs and priorities of the community, through intentional inclusion in decision making of those who live in the communities where the investments will take place.

Healing Through Policy proposes the following policy actions to advance a more equitable local economy:

- Income and asset strategies to promote economic mobility of individuals and families of color.
- Equitable investment and development that prioritizes community voice and assets.
- Compensatory redress to rectify historical injustices that economically disadvantage communities of color.

Income and asset strategies to promote economic mobility of individuals and families of color

Present-day racial income and wealth gaps reflect a lengthy history of racist and discriminatory policies and practices that reduce economic opportunity for communities of color. Ninety percent of the wealthiest 1% of households are white, well above their 65% share of households overall. Inequities in economic policy have created a situation that results in white families receiving much larger intergenerational transfers (e.g., inheritances), which “account for more of the racial wealth gap than any other demographic and socioeconomic indicators.”³

The impact of unequal distribution of income is undeniable. Income inequality is higher in the United States than in other industrialized economies. For decades, wage and income inequality has been increasing in the United States. In 2018, pre-pandemic, the gap between the highest- and lowest-income households was the largest it had been in 50 years.⁴ While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on wealth disparities remains to be seen, historically, families of color are hardest hit by economic downturns. As the Urban Institute notes, during the Great Recession, “White families’ wealth fell 26.2%, while the wealth of Black families fell by 47.6% and Latinx families’ wealth fell by 44.3%.”⁵

Common-sense wage policy solutions and strategic investments for individuals and families with the greatest need are necessary for creating a solid pathway for individual and family wealth building.

Policy Examples

- *Raising the minimum wage and/or requiring a living wage:* While the Biden administration is pushing to raise the minimum wage, the federal minimum wage (\$7.25) has not increased since 2009. In the absence of federal action, states and localities have considered or adopted policies to either increase the minimum wage or require a living wage. A living wage is a locally mandated wage that is higher than state or federal minimum wage levels. Living wages may be set at the level needed for a family of four to meet the federal poverty guidelines threshold, which was \$26,200 for a family of four in 2020.⁶ Living wages may also be calculated based on factors such as location or family composition and include additional expenses such as childcare, taxes, and savings.⁷ As women of color are disproportionately affected by wage inequalities, with Black female workers earning 65.1% and Hispanic female workers earning 58.9% of what a white male earns, pursuing policies to raise wages must also pay attention to the gap in wages based on gender and race.⁸

Seattle, with strong advocacy from the “Fight for \$15” organizing campaign, passed a law to gradually increase its minimum wage (from \$9 in 2014) to \$15 over seven years.⁹ At the beginning of 2021, the city’s minimum wage increased to \$16.69 per hour for large businesses (more than 500 employees).¹⁰

Some living wage laws also mandate or encourage employers to provide health coverage and other benefits to workers. For example, Los Angeles' living wage ordinance requires employers to offer a wage that includes health insurance at no cost to employees. Living wage initiatives may overlap with efforts to increase the local minimum wage. The San Francisco Living Wage Coalition worked to increase wages for municipal workers at the San Francisco International Airport and now supports the city's minimum wage law.¹¹

Currently, 29 states and the District of Columbia have a minimum wage higher than the federal minimum wage, and 42 localities have adopted a minimum wage above their state minimum wage. San Diego's living wage law has been in effect for 10 years. Covered employees have reported higher standards of living and reduced economic pressure.¹² Dallas requires all proposals for use of city funds to include the \$10.37-per-hour wage.¹³ Hartford, Connecticut set a living wage rate that exceeds federal poverty guidelines and the state minimum wage.

Some local governments cannot enact such measures due to state preemption legislation. As of 2020, 25 states had preemption laws in place that prohibit mandatory living wage ordinances and local minimum wage laws.¹⁴ Colorado repealed its preemption law in 2019.¹⁵ Those in support of state preemption of minimum wages frequently cite concerns about varying wage levels across the state and that higher local minimum wages put

the city or county at a competitive disadvantage relative to surrounding localities.¹⁶ Much of the evidence indicates minor or no job losses for moderate increases (8-10%) of the minimum wage, despite potential job loss being used as a key counterargument. It's also important to note that much of the research on minimum wage increases has focused on these moderate increases and less is known about the impact of larger increases (to \$13 or \$15) being considered or implemented.¹⁷

- *Universal basic income or guaranteed income:* An emerging policy strategy is to provide a universal basic income (UBI), also known as guaranteed income. Guaranteed income programs give direct, recurring, and unconditional cash payments to residents. At least 11 cities are piloting UBI programs, including Pittsburgh and Compton, California. In addition, over 40 mayors are participating in Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, which advocates for guaranteed income at the local, state, and federal levels; investing in "narrative change efforts to highlight the lived experiences of economic security;" and supporting pilot programs.¹⁸
- *College savings and investments for low-income families:* Children and youth from families with low incomes do not have the benefit of college savings. Their parents are often struggling to ensure basic needs are met, which means that there are usually little to no ancillary funds to put toward saving for post-secondary education. In addition, lower family wealth means that college students of color are more likely to rely on debt loans to finance

higher education. The resulting debt often prevents them from building wealth that can then be passed on through generations, exacerbating and continuing the racial wealth gap. Cities are attempting to address this inequity through various strategies, including city-led children's savings accounts. Several cities, including Boston and Chelsea, Massachusetts; Caldwell, Idaho; and Durham, North Carolina, provide city-led children's savings accounts. These are long-term savings or investment accounts that provide incentives to help children, especially low-income children, build dedicated savings for post-secondary education.

Research shows that when a low- to moderate-income child has a savings account — even if that account holds less than \$500 — they are three times more likely to enroll in college and four times more likely to graduate.¹⁹ Another example in Michigan is the Kalamazoo Promise, which has guaranteed 100% post-secondary education support for K-12 public school graduates since 2005. In 2015, Tennessee became the first state to offer free community college tuition to all high school graduates; California, New York, and Oregon (including four-year state universities) have followed suit.

- *Down payment and mortgage assistance to support homeownership as a path to building wealth:* Many cities and counties have grant or loan programs that provide down payment and/or closing cost assistance to provide a pathway to homeownership for households that lack sufficient savings to cover the upfront expenses

associated with purchasing a home. This assistance is usually done through grants (often for \$5,000 or less). Forgivable, no- or low-interest loans are the usual mechanisms for providing this support.²⁰

Metro Mortgage Assistance Plus provides a grant to cover down payment and closing costs of up to 4% of the loan through the Denver Office of Economic Development. The city has a \$30 million revolving pool that provides funding for the program.²¹ In Ohio, the Cuyahoga County Down Payment Assistance Program run through Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland provides down payment assistance up to 17% of the total transaction cost.²²

However, home buyer initiatives that encourage individuals to be able to own their homes are often set at levels that are still unaffordable due to the rising cost of living in cities. Rising costs of housing markets and property taxes present a challenge in achieving and maintaining homeownership.

Evidence for Improving Health and Racial Equity

Income is the most critical determinant of health. As described in the Healthy People 2020 report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, financial capacity shapes individual and population health by influencing the degree to which an individual's basic needs are met. Other social determinants of health, such as safe housing, educational achievement, and job opportunities, are closely linked to financial resources. People earning lower wages face significant barriers to safe and healthy environments and

resources. A living wage allows people to meet an array of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, transportation, childcare, and medical needs.²³

Living wage laws appear to be most helpful for workers just below and just above the poverty line.²⁴ Specifically, moderate living wage requirements for local government workers, contractors, and grantees are the most likely to reduce poverty rates. Life expectancy for individuals with earnings above the federal poverty line is five years longer than that of people with earnings below the poverty line.²⁵ The Economic Policy Institute has demonstrated how raising the \$7.25 federal minimum wage would increase the purchasing power of low-wage earners, boost the economy, and increase people's capacity to spend new

earnings on previously unaffordable basic needs or services to protect their health.²⁶

Lifting individuals out of poverty is only one of many mechanisms through which raising the minimum wage can improve public health. Increasing wages can improve psychological well-being and job satisfaction, improve delay-of-gratification ability, and increase the opportunity costs of engaging in unhealthy habits.²⁷

Living wage or minimum wage increases have significant promise for advancing racial equity. Several studies have indicated that the positive effects of these increases would be most realized among historically underserved communities, especially women and people of color.^{28 29 30}

Equitable investment and development that prioritizes community voice and assets

The conditions of a community and the health of the individuals living in it are inextricably linked. Due to decades of disinvestment, many people of color live in places where housing is of poorer quality and also unaffordable, public transportation is limited or non-existent, healthy food options are scarce, and schools are under-resourced and under-performing. Equitable investments that encourage and support entrepreneurship and small businesses, especially those owned by Black, Indigenous, and immigrant people, can create vibrant communities that can be fertile ground for economic growth.

Policy Examples

- *Housing trust funds:* These trusts are a flexible source of funding that can be used to support a range of affordable

and innovative housing options.

These trusts are administered at the state, city, or county level and can be responsive in addressing local priorities and needs. Housing trust funds systemically shift affordable housing funding from annual budget allocations to the commitment of dedicated public revenue. Housing trust funds are inherently extremely flexible and have been widely adopted in small towns and big cities alike.³¹

There are now 47 states with housing trust funds, as well as Washington, D.C., and more than 750 city and county housing trust funds in operation.³² They dedicate more than \$2.5 billion annually to help address critical housing needs throughout the country.³³

In Massachusetts, the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund is focused on preserving and creating affordable rental and homeownership units as well as providing direct assistance to renters and homeowners. Funds may be used for a variety of activities that support these goals, including site development for new construction, rehabilitation subsidies and arson prevention for existing developments, and assistance with security deposits or down payments and closing costs for renters and home buyers. At least 20% of funds must be used to serve households with incomes below 50% of the area median income. The trust also promotes the use of funds to serve people experiencing homelessness.³⁴

Austin, Texas funds its housing trust with property tax revenue from projects built on land that was previously owned by the city. Funds support rehabilitation and creation of new affordable housing, including in higher-income neighborhoods and Homestead Preservation Districts that have been targeted for reinvestment, among other activities.³⁵

- *Participatory budgeting* (PB): This is a democratic process in which residents are directly involved in deciding how public funds are spent. PB is different from other forms of citizen participation in budget decisions (e.g., public forums, surveys, public comment periods) because residents have decision-making authority in addition to input. Through direct involvement of residents and their knowledge of local conditions and needs, PB allows for budget decisions to be

better aligned with community priorities, with the potential for more equitable distribution of resources when the voices of disadvantaged communities are elevated. As PB typically requires residency, not citizenship, for participation, the PB process provides an opportunity to engage people who cannot participate in traditional voting. For example, in Louisville, Kentucky, people under the age of 18, those who are undocumented, and those who have a felony on their record can participate in PB.³⁶

The PB process originated in Brazil in 1989, with an aim to redirect resources to where residents found the greatest need. It was first piloted in the United States in Chicago in 2009 and is currently in its 11th cycle.^{37 38} In 2012, the first multi-ward PB cycle was implemented in an initiative known as “PB Chicago,” which culminated with 2,574 Chicago residents participating in the decision to fund 21 projects totaling \$4 million.³⁹

In 2012, the Vallejo City Council in California established the first citywide PB process in the United States, which includes an additional step beyond the voting phase, to evaluate the process and monitor the implementation of the winning projects.⁴⁰ During the first five cycles, the Vallejo allocated over \$8.3 million to fund a total of 47 projects and engaged over 20,000 residents.⁴¹ After four years of community advocacy, Greensboro, North Carolina was the first city to implement a PB process in the South, working with the Participatory Budgeting Project.⁴² The process

in Greensboro is distinct in that the funds allocated for the process come directly from the city's general fund, rather than, for example, discretionary funds.⁴³

In 2017, Wickenburg, Arizona, a small town with a population of 6,400, allocated \$50,000 to select a project decided through a PB process, and ultimately funded an additional project.⁴⁴ In their third cycle, Wickenburg increased the funds for PB to \$223,000.⁴⁵ In San Antonio, District 9 allocated \$1 million to a PB process, with voters as young as 13 years of age, that funded 10 projects in their 2019 fiscal year budget.⁴⁶ In December 2020, Philadelphia announced the launch of a PB process to decide how to spend \$1 million, committing to link the process to racial equity.⁴⁷

- *Offices or task forces devoted to community wealth building and comprehensive equity packages/funds:* A growing number of states, cities, and counties are formalizing their commitment to addressing the racial wealth gap through dedicated entities and funding streams. Richmond, Virginia, created the first Office of Community Wealth Building.⁴⁸ Charlottesville, Virginia passed a \$4 million equity package specifically for marginalized communities to fund public housing redevelopment, GED training for public housing residents, scholarships for low-income residents, and other programs.⁴⁹

Through a charter amendment (passed by ballot referendum), Baltimore created an Equity Assistance Fund — a dedicated, non-lapsing funding stream to support racial equity in housing,

access to education, redressing past inequities in the capital budget, and addressing structural racism.⁵⁰ Brookline, Massachusetts established an Economic-Equity Advancement Fund for community programs, benefiting communities of color through a 3% tax on sales of marijuana in Brookline. With a \$1.5 million initial donation, this fund will focus on supporting women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and entrepreneurs of color.⁵¹ To support immigrant entrepreneurs, who represent about a quarter of all U.S. innovation and entrepreneurship, state and local initiatives to remove barriers to participating in the economy and encourage immigrant entrepreneurship, such as Chicago's New Americans Plan, are described in the Law paper.⁵²

Promise for Improving Health and Racial Equity

The proposed policy solutions of housing trust funds, participatory budgeting, and equity funds are investments that support both the infrastructure and the people of a community and hold much promise for improving health and racial equity.

Housing trusts provide dedicated flexible investments that can be used to support community needs for affordable housing, thus improving housing stability, which has a positive impact on health and well-being. Equity funds offer similar flexibility for addressing a range of community needs, including housing, education, job training, and other priorities. The impacts of improving housing stability and community development on health and racial equity are detailed in the Separation paper.

Investments and opportunities for meaningful engagement can help to build trust between government agencies and communities, demonstrate to communities that their existence and opinions matter, and help them feel valued, worthy, engaged, and ultimately, empowered. PB specifically, as a form of civic engagement, may improve the health and well-being of residents through improving their self-efficacy, strengthening civic sector alliances, and allocating resources to communities' greatest needs. Studies have shown that community engagement may have mental health benefits for youth, and some have suggested higher civic engagement is related to more health equity and higher well-being.⁵³ In Brazil, PB has also been associated with greater spending on sanitation and health services and reduction in child and infant mortality.^{54 55}

Reducing barriers to community participation in decision-making and improving inclusive discussions are critical to improving racial equity, and PB has long been advocated as a process to advance equity.⁵⁶ By providing those who traditionally have been excluded as policy actors with access to decision-making, PB may, over time, contribute to benefiting the health and well-being of marginalized residents and communities.⁵⁷

In Greensboro, North Carolina, the PB process has demonstrated that when equity is established at the onset as a goal, public participation can serve as a critical route for both advocacy and decision-making to advance social justice. An ethnographic study of the PB process in Greensboro found that it led to the city reframing public spending issues into questions of ethics and fairness, through participants' centering social justice concerns in discussions of community planning.⁵⁸

Compensatory redress to rectify historical injustices that economically disadvantage communities of color

A spectrum of options for compensatory redress has been explored and implemented, including direct compensation, community investments, and land returns for Indigenous communities. A 2019 report by Prosperity Now and the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy documented that if current economic trends continue, "it will take the median Latino family over 2,000 years just to match the current wealth (financial and housing assets) of the median white household, and Black families will never catch up with white families' current level."⁵⁹ This prediction was prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has

highlighted and exacerbated wealth inequities. The gap between Black and white households appears to have widened again in the latter part of 2020, as the pandemic and deep recession took hold. As a result, Black households have needed to rely more on their savings to cover both health care emergencies and the economic fallout from layoffs than white households.⁶⁰

Racial equity, especially for Black Americans and Indigenous people, will not be realized without closing the wealth gap for current and future generations.

Policy Examples

One recommended strategy for closing the racial wealth gap is acknowledgement of the centuries of deprivation, exploitation, and discrimination, and financial payment to redress these egregious historic injustices.⁶¹ This can be achieved through several actions:

- *Compensatory redress to individuals for past harms:* Historically, the federal government provided monetary compensation to former slave owners through the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862. Through this act, former slave owners were compensated for their “loss of property” and received up to \$300 for each freeperson. It also paid reparations to Japanese Americans for forcibly relocating and incarcerating them in camps during World War II.

Today, compensatory redress policies are being considered and adopted at the local level to rectify centuries of injustices toward Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. In 2015, Chicago enacted a reparations ordinance covering hundreds of African Americans tortured by police from the 1970s to the 1990s. The law calls for \$5.5 million in financial compensation, as well as hundreds of thousands more for a public memorial, and a range of assistance related to health, education, and emotional well-being.⁶² The Chicago City Council created a subcommittee tasked with analyzing the historic harms of slavery and segregation, along with the present harms of institutional discrimination and mass incarceration.⁶³

Asheville, North Carolina passed a resolution calling for a plan to provide reparations to its Black residents and created a Community Reparations Commission.⁶⁴ California is the first-in-the-nation effort by a state government to study reparations, launching in May 2021 a two-year process to study the consequences of slavery and systemic racism against African Americans in California.⁶⁵ In June 2021, Mayors Organized for Reparations and Equity (MORE), a coalition of 11 U.S. mayors, was formed with a commitment to develop pilot projects for reparations in their cities. Members of the coalition agree to support the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act (H.R. 40/S. 1083), establish advisory commissions composed of members of local, Black-led organizations in their respective cities, and work toward developing and implementing reparations pilot programs geared towards a cohort of Black residents.⁶⁶

Despite advocacy from Black leaders, inclusions on several 2020 presidential candidate platforms,⁶⁷ and slight movement at the federal level,⁶⁸ reparations remains a polarizing issue. In addition, one technical barrier for localities to providing direct payments, identified in Evanston, Illinois, is the tax burden on recipients. Because of its inability to exempt payments from state and federal taxes, the city chose to create a fund (described below) where disbursements of funds would go directly to the financial institution or vendor that would hold the tax liability, rather than the resident.⁶⁹

- “*Super fund*” for community development and investment in Black American communities: A [dedicated fund](#) to provide major investments in health care, education, jobs, and infrastructure has been proposed as a form of compensatory redress for Black Americans.^{70 71}

In Evanston, Illinois, the local reparations fund was established to support initiatives addressing historical wealth and opportunity gaps for Black residents. The first initiative, the Restorative Housing Program, acknowledges the harm caused to Black Evanston residents due to discriminatory housing policies and practices and inaction on the part of the city from 1919 to 1969. The funds support homeownership, home improvement, and mortgage assistance, all with the goals of increasing homeownership, building wealth, and creating intergenerational equity among Black Evanston residents.⁷²

- *Tribal sovereignty acknowledgements and land return*: Given the United States’ history of genocide of Indigenous nations, it is critically important for the U.S. to look back at previous treatment of Native people to ensure the same damage does not continue to persist or reoccur. Albuquerque, New Mexico recognizes Tribal sovereignty and self-determination for Tribal governments and requires the city to establish a government-to-government relationship between the city and the surrounding pueblos and Tribes. The new law mandates regular consultation with Tribal governments on actions that affect federally recognized Tribal governments and to assess the impact of city programs on Tribal communities.

It also increases the size of the city commission from five to nine members, with additional members required to be representatives chosen by the Tribal nations.⁷³ Eureka, California passed a resolution to return Duluwat, a Wiyot village site on 202 acres of land on Indian Island, back to the Wiyot Tribe by declaring the land surplus property. It will be the first such transfer of land ownership in U.S. history that was not prompted by litigation.⁷⁴ While land transfer is an example of a small step toward reparations for Indigenous communities, it is critical to be clear that land transfers as a step toward achieving equity is separate from compensation and redress. Previous practices to rectify past wrongdoings have equated compensation to achieving equity rather than as a step toward addressing previous harms and inequities.

Promise for Improving Health and Racial Equity

Scholars have acknowledged both the monetary compensation and acknowledgement of historic injustices being proposed have tremendous potential for improving health and racial equity. By narrowing the current and future wealth gap, supporting these investments can improve community conditions and access to resources, and reduce racism-induced allostatic load.⁷⁵ A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* posits that “a restitutive program targeted towards Black individuals would not only decrease COVID-19 risk for recipients of the wealth redistribution; the mitigating effects would also be distributed across racial groups, benefiting the population at large.”⁷⁶

Scholars have acknowledged that compensatory redress is the only way to counteract the centuries of oppression and disinvestment that has prevented Black families from acquiring and maintaining the resources needed for good health and overall life outcomes. The Brookings Institution notes “an \$800,000 increase in net worth per Black household could have a dramatic impact on Black health, outcomes, homeownership, education, economic security, and more.”⁷⁷

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Economic Policy Institute: Minimum/Living Wage](#)

[Government Alliance on Race & Equity: “Equitable Development as a Tool to Advance Racial Equity”](#)

[Racial Equity Tools: Compensatory Redress](#)

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